

# Remote Work Policy

## Questions and Answers

October 2023

### Key Messages

- Government of Saskatchewan implemented a [Remote Work policy](#) in January 2022.
- Remote work is the exception and not the rule. Remote work is not suitable for all types of a ministry's business, jobs or employees.
- Any approved employee-initiated remote work requests under the Remote Work policy will be no more than part-time (less than a half of the working week).
- Employees can apply for remote work by using [Remote Work Application Form](#) and each request will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- When employees apply for remote work, there are several [Remote Work Criteria](#) to consider when determining if remote work arrangements will be appropriate, such as operational requirements, specific roles and responsibilities, the potential to maintain or improve service or productivity, employee performance and workplace set-up.
- To support flexible work, [Occasional Remote Work Guidelines](#) were implemented along the Remote Work policy. Managers may approve work from home requests on an ad hoc basis in keeping with the guidelines if operational needs are met.
- The policy, guidelines and tools to help managers are available in Taskroom.

### Questions and Answers

#### Where do I access the policy?

Remote Work policy is available on [Taskroom](#).

#### Are all employees eligible for remote work?

Employees may apply for remote work. Each application will be assessed against [Appendix A – Remote Work Criteria](#) to evaluate eligibility. Some positions are not suitable for remote work. Remote work will be the exception and not the rule.

#### Are remote work and work from home the same?

Remote work is work from an approved alternate work location (e.g., employee's home) away from the headquarters building where the employee and the employer have agreed that the remote work will occur.

## **Remote Work Eligibility**

### **Can a manager apply for remote work?**

Yes. Managers can apply for remote work in accordance with the policy. The employer will consider suitability for the organization based on criteria established in [Appendix A – Remote Work Criteria](#), prior to making a decision.

### **Can employees with performance issues or on attendance support apply for remote work?**

Yes. Remote work may not be recommended for employees on Performance Improvement Plan or Attendance Support Plan, but this should be discussed between the employee and their manager. Management has the discretion to approve or deny applications depending on the performance issues experienced.

### **Can an employee seek remote work for medical reasons?**

No. While remote work might be an option for particular health situations, requests for medical accommodation are to be assessed through the [Employment Accommodation Policy 705](#) and the Be at Work program.

### **Are positions that work with personal information, personal health information and/or confidential information eligible for remote work?**

Unless the position's duties that involve protected information can be performed in a paperless setting, these positions are not recommended for remote work. Government offices have privacy safeguards in place that may not be available in a remote work setting. Transporting the files to the remote workplace and storing them there could introduce privacy risks.

### **Can an employee seek remote work as a means for dependent care?**

No. Remote work is not a substitute for dependent care arrangements. The employee must ensure dependent care arrangements are in place and that personal responsibilities are managed in a way that allows the employee to successfully meet the position requirements. Employees and their manager should discuss other applicable policies (family leave, pressing necessity, etc.) that fit employee circumstances.

## **Remote Work Application**

### **Can employees say no to employer-initiated remote work?**

Yes, unless remote work is a condition of employment. When an employer decides to move a work unit to remote work, remote work is voluntary for employees. Affected employees will be invited to apply through [Appendix B - Application Form](#).

### **Why do employees need to apply for employer-initiated remote work?**

Employees need to apply to express interest and to be assessed against the [Appendix A – Remote Work Criteria](#) for employee suitability.

### **Who has authority to approve my remote work application?**

Under the new policy approval of remote work applications, both full- or part-time, resides with the Deputy Ministers (DMs). DMs may delegate approval to the Assistant/Associate Deputy Ministers (ADMs), if

required. If a manager’s recommendation is to deny remote work, the remote work application still needs to go through to the DM (or ADM delegate) for decision. For approval of remote work applications for employer-initiated remote work, DMs may delegate approvals to Divisional Heads. Occasional remote work is subject to the employee’s manager’s approval.

**Once the application has been approved, is remote work guaranteed?**

No. Although application approval is a very important step towards initiating a remote work arrangement, the arrangement must be solidified and confirmed by the signed [Appendix C - Remote Work Arrangement](#).

**If a remote work application is denied, when can the employee re-apply?**

Employees and their manager should discuss reasons for the employee request denial. In some instances, remote work may not be suitable for employee organization or job duties, re-applying will not be required. In other instances, when employee suitability is the reason for denial (e.g., potential employee remote workplace is not suitable for employee’s duties, employee doesn’t have good time management skills, employee has had performance issues in the past), the manager and employee are encouraged to create a plan to improve employee suitability and re-apply in future.

**Occasional Remote Work**

**What is the difference between occasional remote work and regular remote work as per PS 806 Remote Work Policy?**

Remote work, as defined by [PS 806 Remote Work policy](#), is an on-going, long-term arrangement that has a pattern. [Occasional remote work](#) is ad hoc, irregular, and short-term. For example, a remote work arrangement might mean working one day per week remotely for a year or having five work-from-home days per month, or it may consist of working full-time remotely for three months. Occasional remote work may include, for example, working from home in the afternoon to accommodate a personal commitment or working remotely for a week straight to focus on a project.

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time (Hybrid)</b>	<b>Occasional</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of their time remotely</li> <li>• No designated office space at headquarters building</li> <li>• Permanent head approval (Application Form) required</li> <li>• Arrangement form required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Half of the working week remotely</li> <li>• Patterned use</li> <li>• Office space at headquarters building</li> <li>• Permanent head approval (Application Form) required</li> <li>• Arrangement form required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ad hoc or incidental work remotely</li> <li>• Short-term</li> <li>• Manager approval (no form)</li> <li>• No arrangement form</li> </ul>

**Is an application required for occasional remote work?**

No, formal application is not required for occasional remote work. Employee manager can approve such requests through a conversation, email, phone or a text.

**Can an employee use occasional remote work when they are sick and unable to attend the office?**

When an employee is unable to attend the office because of illness but feels well enough to work from home, the [Occasional Remote Work Guidelines](#) may be used. Managers should ensure that occasional

remote work is not used where existing time-away-from-work policies are more appropriate (e.g., sick leave, vacation leave, pressing necessity leave).

## **Out-of-Province Remote Work**

### **Can employees work remotely outside Saskatchewan?**

The policy allows for out-of-province remote work in exceptional circumstances, for example, recruitment or retention of in-demand skills or for filling hard-to-recruit roles. Government will continue to focus on employing people in Saskatchewan.

## **Remote Work Expectations**

### **Are performance expectations different for remote employees?**

No. Performance expectations should not change whether you are working remotely or at the headquarters building.

### **How will employee performance be measured during remote work?**

Employee performance should not be measured differently than it would be at the headquarters building. Employee work and learning plans or Planning for Success, productivity metrics, service standards, completion of tasks, expected outcomes or other regular performance measurements should be applied.

### **Does the employee need to work set hours or can they change their work hours?**

A regular work schedule should be established and agreed upon and incorporated in the Remote Work Agreement. Employee schedules must comply with the Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) and The Saskatchewan Employment Act (SEA). Any changes to these hours must be discussed with the manager and updated in the agreement.

### **Can an employee go on personal trips and work remotely there?**

No. Employees should use their entitlements (e.g., banked EDOs, banked overtime, SDOs, vacation leave) when they wish to travel.

### **When might a remote employee need to be available in person?**

There may be certain obligations, meetings, or team functions where the remote employee must attend in person to meet business and operational needs or maintain connection with the team and larger organization.

### **What happens if there are power/internet outages at the remote workplace?**

Remote employees should contact their manager immediately. The manager will consider what course of action makes most sense for the employee situation. For example, if the employee needs to come to the headquarters building or move to another location where power/internet is on; take an early coffee/lunch break; consider any assignment that they may not need power or internet for (e.g., learning and development time) or time off could also be considered.

**Does a remote employee need to go paperless to work remotely?**

Where confidential, personal or personal health information are involved, adequate safeguards must be in place to protect the privacy of those records. A paperless work environment helps protect against many risks. In a remote workplace, going paperless is ideal and strongly encouraged. If it's not possible, safeguards must be addressed in the [Appendix C – Remote Work Arrangement](#).

**If the remote work arrangement negatively impacts performance or client service, can it be changed?**

Yes. Remote work agreements can be adjusted or terminated, as determined by the employer.

**How does one determine the success of remote work in their work unit or organization?**

Establish clear objectives of remote work, determine what success would look like and put in place performance measures (e.g., improved access to a program, improved diversity representation, reduced costs, improved productivity). Measures should illustrate if the objectives are being met and to what extent. It is also important that managers and leaders continuously monitor remote employees' productivity, engagement and wellbeing.

**What could cause the remote work arrangement to be terminated effective immediately?**

Termination of agreement without notice is at employer's discretion where remote work has led to a serious incident (e.g., breach of privacy, breach of conduct, breach of trust).

**Do managers need to revisit Safety Checklist after the agreement is signed?**

The [Appendix D – Safety Checklist](#) should be reviewed annually in conjunction with the renewal of the remote work agreement. If a manager has concerns about remote workplace safety at any time, an inspection should be arranged.

**What happens when remote work arrangement is terminated?**

Where remote work is not a condition of employment, employee will need to return to the headquarters building, as per plan design by the employee manager. If return to headquarters building is not possible, the applicable provisions of the [CBA](#) apply. Managers should contact their HR Business Partner for guidance.

**Remote Work Equipment**

**What equipment does an employee need to work remotely?**

Managers should work with employees to determine the equipment needed to perform position duties remotely. Managers should consult ITD and ministry corporate services as required.

**How does an employee acquire IT equipment for remote work?**

Employees are responsible for collecting and transporting IT equipment from their headquarters building to their remote workplace. In some instances, the equipment can be delivered through courier services. Employees can consult with their Executive Coordinator about this option.

**How does an employee install IT equipment at the remote workplace?**

Employees are responsible for the set up and installation of IT equipment at the remote workplace. Installation instructions and other IT related resources are available on [Taskroom](#). ITD resources will not

provide any onsite support services for remote workplaces, but employees can seek support from the Help Desk (306-787-5000) or through appointments at ITD support kiosks.

**If an employee had ergonomic accommodations (e.g., sit/stand desk, specialized equipment) at the headquarters building, what would their accommodation at the remote workplace look like?**

Employee manager should create a separate Be at Work case for remote work accommodation. This also applies to part-time or hybrid arrangements. Each accommodation case is unique and will be assessed under the [Employment Accommodation Policy \(PS 705\)](#).

## **Remote Work Expenses**

**If an employee travels from the remote workplace to a building within the headquarters that is not their headquarters building, are they eligible for travel cost reimbursement?**

Employees are eligible for travel cost reimbursement according to the intra city travel policy from their headquarters building or remote work location, whichever is the lesser distance.

**Are there any exceptions where travel reimbursement can be approved between the remote workplace and the headquarters building?**

With approval from the ministry's permanent head or designate, reimbursement for travel between the remote workplace and the headquarters building may be considered in exceptional circumstances. Exceptions include instances where remote work is a condition of employment, or the position has been designated as hard-to-recruit and additional allowances may be required. Exceptions must be noted in the [Appendix C - Remote Work Arrangement](#).

**If an employee travels from the remote workplace to another building at the remote work location, are they eligible to claim for meal or accommodation reimbursement?**

No. Employees are responsible for meals and accommodation at the remote work location.

**If an employee travels from the remote workplace to the headquarters location or headquarters building, are they eligible for a meal or accommodation allowance?**

No. Employees are responsible for meals and accommodation when traveling to any building within the headquarters location.

**If an employee travels from the remote workplace to the headquarters building, is travel time considered a work time?**

No. Similar to non-remote employees traveling to and from headquarters, generally travel time from the remote workplace to the headquarters building is not considered work time. Managers should try to avoid situations when travel to headquarters happens during work time, for example, schedule meetings for 8 am or have employees stay for an entire day.

**Can an employee be reimbursed for operating expenses (e.g., electricity, heating, internet, phone lines), maintenance or upgrade costs (e.g., lighting installation, door locks), furnishings or insurance costs required to establish and maintain the remote workplace?**

Employees are responsible for all associated costs of the remote work arrangement unless otherwise specified in the agreement and any exceptions are approved by the permanent head or designate and noted

in the [Appendix C - Remote Work Arrangement](#). Exceptions may be considered if remote work is a condition of employment, or the position has been designated as hard-to-recruit and additional allowances may be required.

## **Remote Work and Tax Returns**

### **Can an employee claim tax credits associated with remote work?**

Employees working remotely may be eligible to claim a portion of their expenses when filing their income tax to CRA. Employees should check with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) with respect to their eligibility to deduct expenses related to remote work.

### **What does the manager need to do if an employee is eligible for the Income Tax Returns Form T2200?**

Managers may complete and sign this form if the remote work is a condition of employment (which now includes either verbal or written remote work agreements – new in the 2023 tax year), and the employee is required to pay for certain expenses without reimbursement. Contact the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for further assistance in completing this form, if required.