



Massachusetts Municipal Association

MMA BEST PRACTICES SERIES

Recommendations for Effective Local Government Administration and Management from MMA Policy Committees

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MMA Policy Committee on Personnel and Labor Relations

Best Practice: Municipal Remote Work Policies

While local government has an inherent responsibility to be available and physically present for residents, the workforce is changing and municipalities will need ways to compete, especially with the private sector. Like many sectors, jobs across local government are inherently different, and some may not be able to accommodate remote work at all, or as much.

Remote work and flexibilities catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic now force municipalities to compete against many full-time, remote-only work options throughout the labor market. For municipalities interested in offering remote or tele-work to employees, establishing a policy is strongly recommended.

Unclear and unsatisfactory policies regarding remote work may cause municipalities to lose out on significant portions of the workforce, further complicating efforts to recruit and retain the talent they need to serve residents. This could also risk significant liability or morale issues for a municipality through inefficient or inequitable enforcement and administration of remote work policies and programs.

To remain competitive, municipalities choosing to offer remote/telework should develop a fair and equitable policy and process to determine the availability and viability of remote work allowances.

The following best practices are recommended:

- Use employee engagement and surveys to regularly determine employee preferences regarding remote, in-person, and hybrid work.
- Review all jobs to analyze the feasibility of remote or hybrid work, including how often.

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- Create a remote work policy that has consistent application across departments or divisions to the extent practicable, and include a comprehensive application, review, approval and appeals process.
- Define metrics for success, including an evaluation process to adapt for all modalities of work.
- Develop a system of intentional check-ins for supervisors and managers to adequately support employees, regardless of where the work is performed.
- Clarify time and on-site commitments in writing at the start of the arrangement. Some remote work options may have flexibility in the time of day worked, while others may require a set schedule to be available.
- Develop a clear revocation process for when a supervisor/employer wants to end a remote work arrangement. Ensure this is communicated to employees ahead of time.
- Allow separate options for remote work specific to medical emergencies, which can articulate length of time, evaluations, and any return to on-site circumstances.
- Consider flexible schedules if it meets the needs of departments and the municipality, but clarify the process in any policy.
- When applicable, post public office hours on municipal websites for departments with frequent telework, in order to provide a reliable and understood service level to the general public.
- Include necessary rules around IT training, equipment, IT use, return of equipment, any cost-sharing arrangements, etc

Municipal examples

- [City of Cambridge Telework Policy](#)
- [Town of Dudley Remote Work Policy](#)
- [Town of Wellesley Remote Work Policy](#)
- [City of Worcester Telework Policy](#)

Resources

- [Hybrid Work for Commonwealth Employees](#) (Executive Office for Administration and Finance)
- [Telework Policy for State Executive Branch Agencies](#) (Human Resources Division, August 2021)