

# TEXAS ETHICS COMMISSION



## TELEWORK PLAN

## TEC Telework Plan

**Effective Date:** September 1, 2025

**Purpose:** The purpose of this Telework Plan is to establish the policies and procedures governing the use of telework or remote work at the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC). It is the policy of the TEC to allow the use of telework if it provides reasonable flexibility that enhances the TEC's ability to achieve its mission or to address a lack of available office space. Providing the option of part-time telework to employees helps the TEC accomplish its mission by recruiting and maintaining high-performing employees that perform tasks that can be efficiently accomplished in a remote-work environment.

This plan is intended to implement the requirements of Chapter 658 of the Government Code. To the extent this plan conflicts with Chapter 658 of the Government Code, or other statute, the statute prevails.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all TEC employees.

**Limitations:** Telework may not be offered as a condition of employment.

Telework must be approved by an agreement between the employee and the executive director. The agreement must be in writing, include the reasons telework is being authorized, state the terms under which the agreement may be revoked, and be renewed at least once each year after the employee begins telework, and may be revoked by the TEC at any time without notice.

A telework agreement does not prohibit the TEC from requiring an employee to report to the employee's regular or assigned temporary place of employment or another work location on a day on which the agreement otherwise authorizes telework for a meeting, special event, or other engagement for which the TEC determines in-person interaction is necessary.

A teleworking employee is subject to the same rules and disciplinary actions as any other agency employee.

A teleworking employee is prohibited from conducting in-person business with another employee at the employee's personal residence.

Aside from employees eligible for full-time telework, an employee's telework schedule must include at least two in-office work days a week.

**Defined Terms:** In this plan "**Primary Work Location**" means the employee's regular on-site workplace (TEC headquarters). "**Remote Work Location**" means the off-site location where the employee performs work (Home or other authorized location).

## 1. Eligibility

**A. Occasional Telework:** Employees can request to work remotely on an as-needed basis, provided their job duties allow flexibility and they meet performance expectations. Occasional telework is more suited for those employees whose job duties normally require full-time presence in the office.

**B. Part-time Telework:** A work arrangement in which an employee regularly performs assigned job responsibilities from a remote work location for not more than three days per week. Part-time telework is more suited for those employees whose job duties can be accomplished efficiently in a remote-work environment and whose performance evaluations reflect an ability to perform at a high level in a remote-work environment.

**1. Eligibility Requirements:** To be eligible for part-time telework, an employee must meet the following criteria:

**a. Position Suitability:**

- i. The employee's duties must be performed effectively outside the primary work location.
- ii. The position must not require daily face-to-face interaction with clients or frequent in-person collaboration unless remote alternatives are feasible.

**b. Performance Standards:** The employee must demonstrate an ability to work efficiently in a remote environment as demonstrated through performance reviews, applicable efficiency measures, timely responses to co-workers and clients, and any other way the employee's manager monitors the employee's productivity.

**c. Workspace and Equipment:**

- i. The employee must have a secure, quiet, and ergonomically appropriate workspace at the remote work location.
- ii. The employee must have access to a reliable internet connection at their own cost and any other tools needed to perform their duties effectively.

**d. Manager Approval:**

- i. Telework arrangements must be approved in writing by the employee's direct supervisor and the executive director.
- ii. Management may require a trial period (e.g., 30-60 days) to evaluate effectiveness.

**C. Full-Time Telework:**

1. Employees may be eligible for full-time telework if their job duties can be performed remotely without the need for frequent in-office presence. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the division head and the executive director.
2. Employees may be eligible for **full-time telework** if they meet all the following criteria:
  - a. **Distance to Work:** Primary residence is located more than 60 miles from the TEC's physical office. Current employees must have resided there before this policy went into effect. Authorization for full-time telework may be revoked at any time and any employee who is authorized for full-time telework may be required to work in the Primary Work Location on specific days. This requirement may be waived if the job function is better performed from a remote work environment or the TEC lacks sufficient office space for in-office work.
  - b. **Performance Evaluations:** Demonstrate the ability to consistently meet or exceed performance expectations. These expectations will be evaluated quarterly.
  - c. **Productivity:** Demonstrate the ability to complete tasks on time and at a high level of quality.
  - d. **Communication:** Maintain regular, clear, and effective communication with colleagues, managers, and clients (if applicable).
  - e. **Reliability:** Consistently meet deadlines, attend virtual meetings, and be reachable during work hours.
  - f. **Self-Management:** Demonstrate the ability to work independently and manage time effectively without direct supervision
3. **Trial Period for Full-Time Telework:** New full-time telework arrangements may require a trial period to evaluate the employee's performance while working remotely. During this time, both the employee and supervisor will assess the arrangement to determine if it should be continued long-term.

**4. Managerial Review:** Full-time telework requests will be reviewed by the employee's direct supervisor and the executive director. The review process will include consideration of job duties, team dynamics, and the employee's ability to perform at the expected level remotely. Managers will also assess whether full-time telework aligns with department goals and needs. In addition to full-time telework approval being conditioned on providing reasonable flexibility that enhances the TEC's ability to achieve its mission or to address a lack of available office space, a manager of a full-time teleworker must create employee-specific metrics to ensure the employee is working efficiently.

**D. Job-Specific Exceptions:** Certain roles that require in-office presence (e.g., customer-facing roles, operations) may not be eligible for telework.

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## **2. Employee Expectations & Responsibilities**

- A. Work Hours:** Employees are expected to maintain their regular working hours while teleworking unless otherwise agreed upon with their supervisor.
  - B. Availability:** Employees must be available during business hours for meetings, communications, and to complete assigned tasks. This includes being reachable via email, phone, or other designated platforms like Microsoft Teams.
  - C. Productivity:** Employees must meet performance expectations, complete tasks on time, and achieve work goals. Managers will set measurable performance goals and will monitor progress.
  - D. Communication:** Employees are expected to maintain clear and open communication with supervisors, team members, and clients (if applicable). Regular check-ins or updates on projects are required.
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## **3. Work Environment**

- A. Workspace Requirements:** Employees must ensure their telework environment is conducive to productivity and free from distractions. A quiet, secure workspace with appropriate lighting and ergonomic furniture is recommended.
- B. TEC Equipment:** TEC may provide equipment, including laptops, monitors, or other computer devices necessary to perform work tasks, minus internet connection or cell phones. TEC will not provide office furniture such as desks or chairs. Employees

are responsible for maintaining TEC-issued equipment and ensuring it is used for business purposes only.

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#### **4. Security & Confidentiality**

- A. Data Protection:** Employees must adhere to TEC data security policies while working remotely. This includes using TEC-approved virtual private networks (VPNs) and encryption tools to protect sensitive data. TEC business should be conducted on only TEC-issued electronic devices. Personal phones may be used provided the phone uses a TEC license application and does not save TEC data locally on a personal device (e.g. it is permissible to install and use Outlook and Teams on a personal phone).
  - B. Confidentiality:** Employees are expected to maintain the confidentiality of TEC information while teleworking, including preventing unauthorized access to documents, emails, and other confidential materials. Employees are restricted from taking home confidential hard copy files unless absolutely necessary and even then, only with approval from the employee's division director.
  - C. Security Breaches:** Any security breaches (e.g., lost devices, unauthorized access) must be reported to IT immediately. Employees are responsible for keeping devices and work-related materials secure at all times.
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#### **5. Technology & Support**

- A. Remote Access:** Employees must use TEC-approved platforms for communication, collaboration, and file-sharing (e.g., Microsoft Teams, SharePoint). Access to TEC systems should be done through a secure VPN connection.
- B. IT Support:** TEC will provide IT support for any technical issues related to TEC equipment or software. Employees should contact CSD for troubleshooting. The TEC will not provide in-home setup or troubleshooting. If any issue cannot be resolved remotely, the employee must return to work to have the issue resolved.
- C. Hardware & Software:** Any additional hardware or software needed for telework must be approved by the IT department. TEC may provide software licenses, as determined by the department.

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## 6. Attendance & Timekeeping

- A. Time Tracking:** Employees working remotely must accurately track their work hours. CAPPS time and labor system should be used to log hours worked and leave taken, including wellness breaks. Employees must log in to Teams when they begin their workday and keep Teams open and active throughout the workday.
- B. Absences:** Remote workers must notify their manager promptly if they are unable to work due to illness, personal matters, or other emergencies, just as they would in the office. An email should also be sent to [attendance@ethics.state.tx.us](mailto:attendance@ethics.state.tx.us) for inclusion in the TEC attendance calendar.
- C. Leave Requests:** Employees must follow the TEC's established procedures for requesting time off, including using the employee portal and contacting their supervisor in writing. Written leave requests and approvals are required for audit purposes.

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## 7. Compliance & Performance Reviews

- A. Compliance:** Employees must adhere to all TEC policies while teleworking.
- B. Performance Reviews:** Teleworking employees will be evaluated based on performance, including productivity, meeting deadlines, and communication. Quarterly performance reviews will be conducted to assess work output, identify any areas for improvement, and to determine whether telework can continue.

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- 8. Telework Agreement:** Employees must sign a Telework Agreement that outlines their understanding and acceptance of the terms and conditions of remote work. This agreement must be approved by the executive director and renewed annually and updated as needed.

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## 9. Telework Termination or Modification

- A. Termination of Telework:** TEC reserves the right to terminate or modify telework arrangements based on business needs, performance concerns, or other factors. Employees will be given adequate notice if telework is no longer feasible.

- B. Voluntary Changes:** Employees wishing to return to the office full-time or alter their telework arrangement must submit a formal request, which must be approved by the employee's manager and executive director.
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- 10. This plan must be published on the TEC's website.**