



U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Telework Questions and Answers

The following questions and answers are designed to help you understand United States Department of Agriculture telework policy. Please refer to [Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002](#) for more information.

(1) What are the main changes to the telework policy?

USDA will be amending its telework policy to one that enables our employees to accomplish their mission for the American taxpayer effectively and efficiently as part of OneUSDA. Some of the changes are as follows:

- There will be improved, common sense eligibility requirements for individuals seeking telework. For example, in the previous telework directive, employees whose duties required physical presence on a daily basis were eligible to telework if parts of their work could be accomplished at an alternative worksite. In the new directive, employees whose duties require physical presence in the office on a daily basis are not eligible to telework.
- Employees will only be permitted to telework 2 days per pay period.
- Employees will be required to work from their official work location 4 days per week.
- When telework is used to address space availability restrictions, such as the use of hoteling or desk-sharing, Mission Areas, agencies, and staff offices may approve telework exceeding 2 days a pay period on a case-by-case basis.

Note that this DR does not affect what has been negotiated by employees under a Collective Bargaining Agreement. Employees seeking telework arrangements as a reasonable accommodation are required to follow Departmental, and agency or staff office procedures for reasonable accommodation.

(2) I currently telework 100% of the time, since my duties do not require me to be in the office. How will this change in policy affect me?

Since the new telework policy limits the amount of time you can telework within a pay period, if you want to continue to work full-time from an alternative work station, you should discuss with your supervisor a change in duty station.



(3) Given that telework is permitted for 2 days per pay period, does that prevent me from working a flexible schedule (e.g. 5-4/9, or 4-10 compressed)?

Telework should not preclude your having some flexible or compressed work schedules. However, it is important to note that the directive also states that all employees must work from the official worksite location 4 days per week, thus the telework schedule and tour of duty must accommodate that requirement.

Your supervisor has the ability to authorize employees with telework agreements and flexible schedules to telework for more than 1 day a week for infrequent, exigent situations on a case-by-case basis, as long as they weigh the balance between employees’ needs and the ability to deliver the Department’s mission with high quality customer service.

(4) What was the rationale to reduce the number of telework days to 2 days a period and require physical presence at the official workstation for 4 days a week?

As part of the OneUSDA initiative, we are requiring a greater physical presence in all USDA offices. We recognize the importance and value of telework. We also want to encourage greater collaboration and provide the best customer service to both internal and external stakeholders. We believe this change will make us more accountable to the American taxpayer and more accountable to one another.

(5) Who determines if my position is telework ineligible?

The Mission Area, Agency Heads, or Staff Office Directors are ultimately responsible for determining eligibility for all employees of the agency or staff office to participate in telework. This responsibility can be delegated down to managers and/or supervisors, as needed.

(6) Are there circumstances where I may be considered for telework exceeding the 2 days per pay period?

A Mission Area, agency, or staff office head may approve teleworking exceeding 2 days a pay period when addressing space availability restrictions, such as the use of hoteling or desk sharing. Agency or staff office heads are encouraged to present to their political leadership any other impacts on business decisions that the changes in telework may have on their operations.

(7) If I’m already within 2 days per pay period of telework in my current agreement, do I need to sign a new agreement?

The new policy is accompanied by an updated telework agreement form, so you should plan on discussing your telework agreement with your supervisor and signing the new form.



(8) I am a telework program coordinator for my agency. Is there anything in particular I should be doing to accommodate the changes to the telework policy?

Familiarize yourself with the new policy and accompanying telework agreement form. Also make sure you plan to attend a coordination meeting with all USDA telework program coordinators—the invitation will come from the Office of Human Resource Management for the second week in January.

