

RESEARCH TRIANGLE FOUNDATION

Research Triangle Foundation

TELECOMMUTING POLICY

Research Triangle Foundation (RTF or Foundation) considers telecommuting to be a viable alternative work arrangement in cases where individual, job and managerial considerations are best suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting allows an employee to work at home, on the road, or in a satellite location for all or part of their regular workweek. Telecommuting is a voluntary work alternative that may be appropriate for some employees and some jobs as determined by the RTF management. It is not an entitlement; it is not a RTF-wide benefit; and it does not change the terms and conditions of “at-will” employment with RTF. The procedure for telecommuting follows:

Procedure:

1. Either an employee or a manager can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement. In all cases the Foundation’s President approves the recommendations of RTF management to assign employees to a telecommuting status.
2. Telecommuting can be informal such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel or formal as will be described below. Other informal, short-term arrangements may be made for employees on family or medical leave (to the extent practical for the employee and the organization and with the consent of the employee's health care provider). All informal telecommuting arrangements are made on a case by case basis, focusing on the business needs of the Foundation first. Such informal arrangements are not the focus of this policy since they tend to be temporary and short term in duration.
3. Individuals requesting formal telecommuting arrangements must have been employed with RTF for a minimum of three (3) months of continuous, regular employment and must have demonstrated above average performance in accordance with RTF’s performance management process.
4. Any telecommuting arrangement will be on a trial basis for the first month, and may be discontinued at will and at any time at the request of either the telecommuter or RTF.
5. RTF will determine, with information supplied by the employee and the employee’s manager the appropriate equipment needs (including hardware, software, modems, phone and data lines, facsimile equipment or software, photocopiers, etc.) for each telecommuting arrangement on a case-by-case basis. The human resources and information systems departments will serve as resources in this matter. Equipment supplied by the Foundation will be maintained by RTF. Equipment supplied by the employee, if deemed appropriate by RTF, will be maintained by the employee. RTF accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned/supplied equipment. Additionally, RTF reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Equipment supplied by the Foundation is to be used for business purposes only. The telecommuter will sign an inventory audit of all RTF property and agrees to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment all company property will be returned to the Foundation unless other arrangements have been made. RTF property that is not returned or is returned damaged will be

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replaced or repaired which will be paid by the employee (in such cases such cost may be deducted from the employee's final pay).

6. Consistent with RTF's expectations of "information-asset" security for employees working at the office full-time, telecommuting employees will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and customer/client information accessible from their home office. Steps include but are not limited to: use of locked file cabinets, disk boxes and desks, regular password maintenance, data archiving/backups and any other steps appropriate for the job and the environment as determined by RTF's Human Resources and IT Departments.

7. The employee will establish an appropriate work environment within their home for work purposes. The Foundation will not be responsible for costs associated with initial setup of the employee's home office such as remodeling, furniture or lighting, nor for repairs or modifications to the home office space. Employees will be offered appropriate assistance in setting up a work station designed for safe, comfortable work as determined by RTF's Human Resources and IT Departments.

8. After equipment has been delivered a designated representative of RTF's Human Resources Department will visit the employee's home work site to inspect for possible work hazards and suggest modifications if required to ensure compliance with work place safety regulations. Repeat inspections will occur on an as-needed basis. Injuries sustained by the employee while at their home work location and in conjunction with their regular work duties are normally covered by RTF's workers' compensation policy. Telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying their manager or RTF's Human Resources Department of such injuries in accordance with the Foundation's worker's compensation procedures. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to their work site.

9. RTF will supply the employee with appropriate office supplies (pens, paper, etc.) for successful completion of job responsibilities while telecommuting. The organization will also reimburse the employee for all other business-related expenses such as phone calls, shipping costs, etc. that are reasonably incurred in accordance with job responsibilities.

10. The employee and manager will agree on the number of days of telecommuting allowed each week, the work schedule the employee will customarily maintain and the manner and frequency of communication. The employee agrees to be accessible by phone or modem within 30 minutes during the agreed upon work schedule unless the employee notifies the manager of his/her inaccessibility for some period of time during the telecommuting work period.

11. Telecommuting employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to record all hours worked in a manner designated by RTF's Human Resources Department. Hours worked in excess of those specified per day and per work week, in accordance with state and federal requirements will require the advance approval of the manager. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the immediate cessation of the telecommuting agreement.

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12. Before entering into any telecommuting agreement, the employee and manager, with the assistance of RTF's Human Resources Department, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement paying particular attention to the following areas:
 - a. Job Responsibilities - the manager and Human Resources will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement.
 - b. Employee Suitability – the manager and Human Resources will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to habits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful telecommuters.
 - c. Equipment Needs - work space design considerations and equipment/materials issues will be identified by the manager, Human Resources and IT.
 - d. Tax and Legal Implications - The Foundation's Finance Department will assess the use of the employee's home based on IRS and state and local government restrictions. Responsibility for fulfilling all legal obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.
13. The manager and human resource department will prepare a telecommuting agreement signed by all parties and a one month trial period will commence. This agreement will be in the form of a memorandum of record that specifies the terms and period of the telecommuting agreement. The "telecommuting employee," employee's manager, and RTF's President will sign the document for record in the employee's personnel file.
14. Evaluation of telecommuter performance during the trial period will include daily interaction by phone and e-mail between the employee and the manager, and weekly face-to-face meetings to discuss work progress and problems. At the conclusion of the trial period the employee and manager will each complete an evaluation of the arrangement and make recommendations for continuance or modifications. Evaluation of telecommuter performance beyond the trial period will be consistent with that received by employees working at the office in both content and frequency but will focus on work output and completion of objectives rather than time-based performance; the Human Resources Department will assess the overall effectiveness of the telecommuter's performance and submit a recommendation for continuation to the employee's manager.
15. An appropriate level of communication between the telecommuter and manager will be agreed to as part of the discussion process and will be more structured and formal during the trial period. After conclusion of the trial period, the manager and telecommuter will communicate at a level consistent with employees working at the office or in a manner and frequency that seems appropriate for the job and the individuals involved.
16. Telecommuting is NOT designed to be a replacement for appropriate child care. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate child care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands. Prospective telecommuters are encouraged to discuss expectations of telecommuting with family members prior to entering into a trial period.
17. Employees entering into a telecommuting agreement may be required to forfeit use of a personal office or workstation in favor of a shared arrangement to maximize RTF's office space needs.

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18. In certain limited circumstances, RTF may contract with an office space provider to meet the needs of employees who wish to telecommute but who do not have appropriate home office space, or for groups of employees whose proximity to the organization and to each other makes such an arrangement feasible.

19. The availability of telecommuting as a flexible work arrangement for employees of RTF can be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the employer. Every effort will be made to provide 30 days notice of such a change to accommodate commuting, child care and other problems that may arise from such a change. There may be instances, however, where no notice is possible.

RESEARCH TRIANGLE FOUNDATION RTF TELECOMMUTING OFFICE GUIDELINES

Setting up a telecommuting office requires some advance planning to ensure the employee has an adequate workspace and the necessary equipment and supplies. Important considerations to keep in mind when planning the telecommuting workspace are:

- The work area must be quiet and free of distractions.
- Lighting must be adequate and without glare. (RTF will not pay for reconstruction of the employee's home to develop a home office.)
- Distracting noise should be kept to a minimum.
- The employee's desk must be adequate, designed to safely accommodate the equipment the employee must use (computer keyboard, etc.).
- Comfortable chair with adequate back support (RTF will not provide furniture for the employee's home office).
- Equipment--Computer, fax, modem, printer, etc.,--must be available for the employee's exclusive use while telecommuting and must be compatible with the equipment that employees' use at work.
- Each employee must make arrangements with his or her manager regarding the use of RTF owned equipment in the employee's home, but in no event may the use of such equipment impede the Foundation's access to such equipment nor change the Foundation's ownership of such equipment. The employee will be responsible for the costs of installation of necessary modem and communications software.
- Supplies--The employee is not responsible for purchasing supplies (paper, print cartridges, etc.) necessary for work performed at home. However, the employee must coordinate closely with the manager regarding the use of Foundation purchased supplies.
- RTF is not responsible for insuring the telecommuter's equipment in their home. If the employee's personal equipment "breaks" while performing work for RTF the Foundation is not responsible for replacement or repair.

Sample from Research Triangle Foundation