# Exploring Remote Work Opportunities Supervisor Guidance

# Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we work and ushered in a new era of remote work and hybrid practices. As the university assesses its workforce, there are opportunities to further integrate remote work into our campus structure. Oklahoma State University recognizes remote work may be mutually beneficial to employees and the university in circumstances when the nature of the employee's work, the university's business needs, and the skills and abilities of the employee indicate such an arrangement meets the academic and business needs of the university.

If you are exploring remote work opportunities within your department, please begin familiarizing yourself with Oklahoma State University's workforce flexibility options such as alternate work schedules or hybrid/remote work and reviewing this decision-making resource guide. This resource guide is divided into several sections, each providing information for suitability:

- *Assessing Business Need*
- *Position Suitability Assessment*
- *Employee Suitability*
- *Supervisory Approach*
- *Team Effectiveness*

Once you have reviewed this resource guide and deemed the position suitable for hybrid remote work, you must complete a Remote Work Assessment. This form documents suitability factors for remote work and is utilized to obtain appropriate approval from senior leadership at the dean and/or vice president level, as appropriate, to proceed with establishing a remote work arrangement. Following submission and approval of the [Remote Work Assessment](), the supervisor and employee will complete the [Remote Work Agreement](), after which hybrid remote work may begin.

For additional information or guidance related to remote work arrangements, contact your HR Consultant at tulsa.hr@okstate.edu

# Assessing Business Need

Oklahoma State University recognizes hybrid remote work offers the opportunity to create a more diverse workplace and further foster innovation. Under optimal conditions, hybrid remote work should enable operational efficiencies and enhance the productivity of the unit and the employee. Remote work takes an increased commitment to open communication, support, and accountability for all involved. In some cases, it might have a mixed effect but should not have a negative impact on the team, individual performance, or unit operations.

Consider the following questions in assessing the business need for a hybrid remote work position:

- Does this remote work arrangement serve the best interests of the university?

- Would a remote work arrangement enhance, maintain, or diminish operational efficiencies?

- Does the addition of remote work arrangement(s) enhance the productivity of the department and the employee?

# Position Suitability Assessment

A position can be considered suitable for remote work if the essential functions of the position can be performed away from the regular work location and not disrupt operational efficiencies. The position in consideration should have clearly defined responsibilities, objectives, and outcomes. In evaluating the suitability of remote work, consider roles that serve as individual contributors or positions with limited student interactions. Positions that require physical presence or significant interactions with vendors, coworkers, and/or students would not be suitable for remote work.

Ensure you consider each position individually, per the responsibilities of the role, to determine if the work can be effectively performed outside the regular work environment. The focus of remote work arrangements must be on measurable results.

In determining position suitability, consider the following:

- Does the position require ongoing access to equipment, materials, and files that can only be accessed on campus?

- Does the position require extensive face-to-face contact with students, supervisors, other employees, or the public?

- Does the position require extensive time in meetings or other collaborative efforts within the department or other units/departments?

- Does the position regularly perform work on campus or at a facility work location?

- Does the position have job duties that require a presence on campus or at a facility work location?

If you answered "yes" to any of the questions, this position may not be suitable for remote work.

# Employee Suitability

Once you have determined position suitability can be supported outside of the on-campus work environment, the employee's compatibility for hybrid remote work opportunities must be evaluated.

Suitability for hybrid remote work arrangements should be reviewed individually for current and new incumbents. This section will help you determine if the employee can work in a self-directed manner in managing their work and time.

Factors relating to employee suitability for hybrid remote work arrangements may include:

- Are there concerns with the employee's performance, including corrective action?

- Does the employee possess appropriate time management and organizational skills?

- Does the employee have the necessary computer skills?

- Can the employee's performance in a remote work setting be measured and evaluated?

- Does the employee understand their role and expectations, and require little supervision to complete their tasks?

- Can the employee consistently meet deadlines?

# Supervisory Approach

Supervisors have a different set of challenges when supporting remote employees which requires a different approach, a balance between supervision and trust. You should also consider your management style's compatibility with remote work arrangements. Supervisors retain the responsibility to ensure their remote employees are provided appropriate training and resources to promote success as well as providing accountability. This section will help assess if your management style supports engaging in one or more remote work arrangements with employees.

Consider the following when relating to compatibility of supervisory approach for hybrid remote work arrangements:

- Are you comfortable allowing this employee to work in a remote setting with less direct oversight?

- How frequently do you monitor the employee's work performance?

- How will you approach communication in a virtual environment?

- Have you been successful in establishing clear objectives?

- Can you accurately measure the employee's performance, outcomes, and time worked in a remote setting (remembering the approach is different)?

- Do you trust that the employee will be productive without continuous supervision?

# Team Effectiveness

Effective teams foster open dialogue and collaboration among others for a sense of belonging and strong team morale. While supporting the university's business needs, supervisors are encouraged to individualize remote work plans for employees that honor the needs of the employee while supporting the efficiencies to ensure work is completed effectively. This section will help you determine if the culture of your team is compatible with the establishment of one or more remote work arrangements.

Consider the following relating to team compatibility for hybrid remote work arrangements:

- Do team members frequently work on detailed and complex projects that require collaboration and partnership?

- Does an employee's work location impact teamwork processes and efficiency?

- Can the team sustain engagement in a remote or hybrid work environment?

- Does the team possess resiliency to maintain trust and strong team morale in the face of challenges?

- Would the team support and embrace work environments with a combination of on-site and remote work arrangements?

# Other Considerations

There are some additional considerations that should be weighed when evaluating hybrid remote work arrangements. Review the questions and statements below and evaluate whether the answers would impact the success of a hybrid remote work arrangement.

- Is the employee in their orientation period? If so, you may consider waiting to determine suitability for a remote work arrangement until performance has been consistently established.

- Will the employee be working outside of Oklahoma? Out-of-state remote work is complex due to employment laws, taxation rules, data privacy and cybersecurity risks, and other compliance requirements in other states. Contact your HR Consultant to determine remote work suitability in another state.

- International employees: If they are working from a new work location, different from that described on the original Labor Condition Application (LCA), additional documentation and certification may be required by the Department of Labor prior to beginning work in the new location. Please consult with OSU Human Resources prior to any changes taking place.

- Does the department have the appropriate budget/equipment to support an employee in a remote work arrangement?
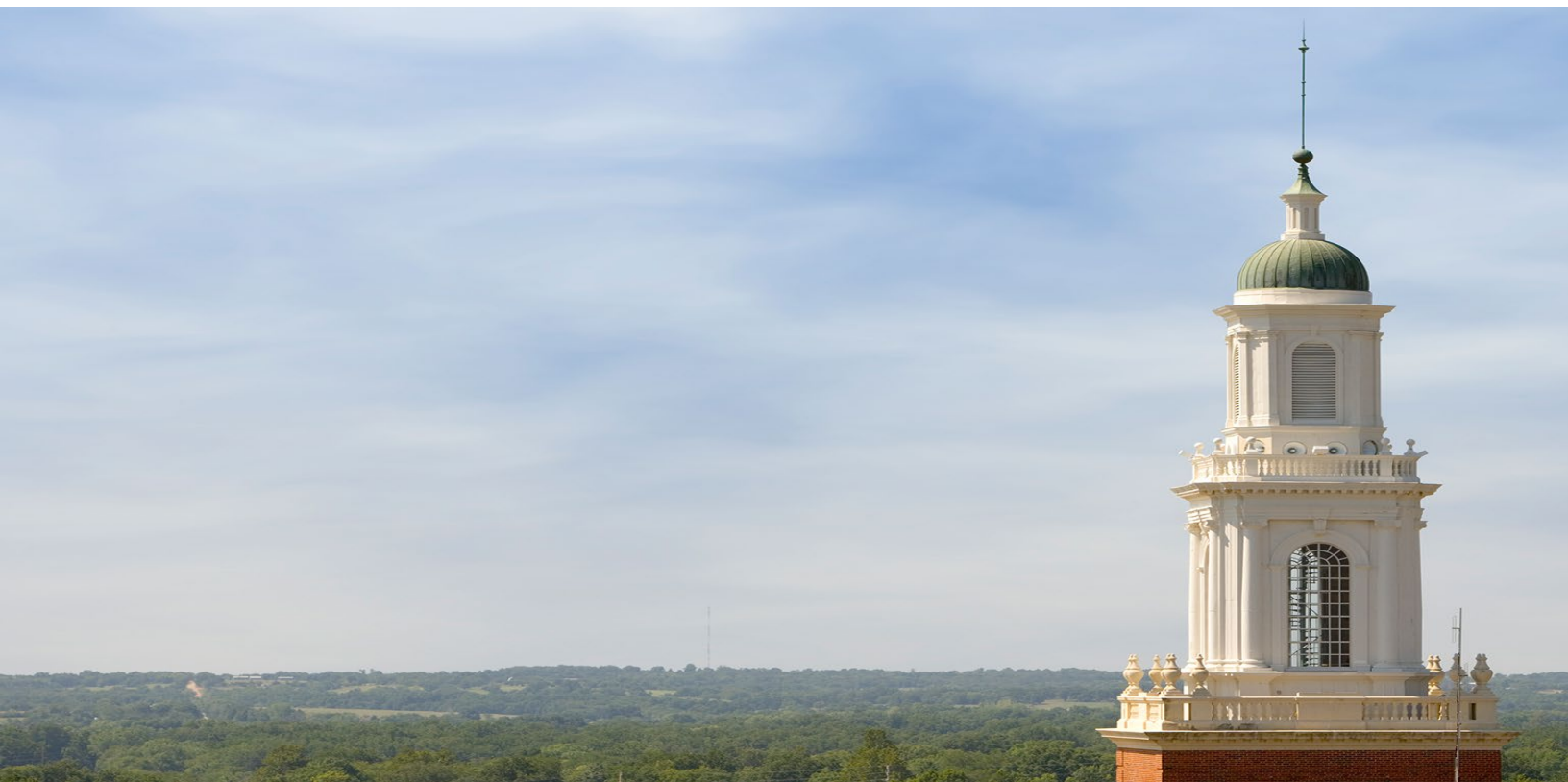
# Formal Hybrid Remote Work Request

If after a thorough review of this supervisor guidance to exploring remote work opportunities, a department head or supervisor wants to pursue a remote work arrangement, they should proceed with these critical steps:

1. **Complete the [Remote Work Suitability Assessment](#)**. This form will document the suitability factors for remote work and is utilized to obtain approval to proceed with establishing a remote work arrangement.

2. **Obtain approval from the appropriate dean and/or vice president.** This approval is obtained on the remote work suitability assessment as indicated above.
   a. If approval is granted, communicate with the employee, and proceed to step 3.
   b. If approval is denied, proceed to the section for a denied work approval.

3. **Complete a [Remote Work Agreement Form](#) in collaboration with the employee.** The agreement documents details about the remote work arrangements including work location, job duties, work schedule, and Equipment Checkout form. Additionally, this document will outline specifics on the uniqueness of the remote work arrangements.

4. **Evaluate the effectiveness of the remote work arrangement**. The university may, at its discretion, discontinue a Remote Work Agreement at any time with advance notice of at least five business days, or as otherwise agreed upon in the Remote Work Agreement.

# Denial of Request

If after a thorough review of this supervisor guidance to exploring remote work opportunities, a department head, supervisor, or OSU Human Resources denies the request to pursue a remote work arrangement, they should:

1. **Complete the [Remote Work Suitability Assessment].** This form will document the suitability factors for remote work and is utilized to approve or deny a remote work request.

2. **Consult with appropriate leadership at the college or division**. Determine if college or division leadership should be notified of the denial of the remote work arrangement request.

3. **Communicate with your employee.** If the assessment does not support a remote work arrangement, the supervisor will inform the employee of the business reasons for not proceeding with the establishment of a remote work arrangement.

4. **Retain the assessment**. This ensures documentation is retained for each remote work suitability assessment completed for reference if needed.

# Conclusion

Hybrid remote work arrangements can be instrumental in business strategies in recruiting and retaining talented employees. Supervisors are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of each remote work arrangement while ensuring such arrangement meets the academic and business needs of the university.

Remaining objective and applying decision-making criteria is critical in ensuring equity within the department and overall success of a remote work arrangements at Oklahoma State University.

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