

Policy Title: Flexible Workplace Policy

Effective Date: Wednesday, November 27, 2023

POLICY STATEMENT

Ramsey County has a flexible workplace environment that enables employees whose job functions are designated as “mobile” or “hybrid” to be eligible for work arrangements that involve a combination of in-person and remote work. Flexible workplace arrangements, also called flexwork, provide eligible employees the opportunity to perform job duties at an alternate worksite that is not their primary Ramsey County facility, office, or project site with supervisor approval. Ramsey County’s flexible workplace environment aligns with the [Residents First Strategic Priority](#), service delivery framework, and [Strategic Facilities Plan](#), as well as its mission, vision, and goals by:

- Enhancing the delivery of resident-facing services in the community.
- Supporting a healthy work-life balance and improve work productivity while maintaining human interactions and connections to a team environment.
- Attracting more prospective employees and help retain a talented workforce.
- Reducing employee travel time and the county’s carbon footprint.

Eligible employees must work with their direct supervisor to set up their flexible work arrangements using this policy and associated documents. The [Workplace Standards Policy](#) is used to determine the type of workspace provided to flexworkers at their primary county facility when working onsite.

Expectations

Unless otherwise indicated, all terms and conditions of employment with Ramsey County remain unchanged by an employee’s status as a flexworker. Flexwork arrangements for eligible employees are not permanent. They are subject to change based on function requirements and the discretion of management, who monitor performance to ensure conditions and expectations agreed to by the employee and supervisor are met. Failure to uphold these expectations in a flexwork environment may result in revocation of a flexible workplace arrangement or discipline up to and including termination.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all county employees and to all county facilities and offices, whether owned or leased.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Severe Weather

In accordance with the Severe Weather Policy in Administrative Code 5.40.81, the County Manager, or designee, has the sole authority and discretion to close any county offices, facilities and/or operations in the event of severe weather. Department heads may adjust staffing schedules and duties as necessary, in accordance with the [Severe Weather Procedure](#).

Everyday Professionalism

All employees must practice professional etiquette whether they are working in person or remotely. How we present ourselves to Ramsey County residents, clients, stakeholders, community partners, coworkers, managers, and supervisors impacts our work culture, office environment and how to model [Ramsey County's Core Values](#). Expectations of professional etiquette include but are not limited to:

- **Show up professionally.** Whether working in person or remotely, show up as if you are serving our residents in person. When in virtual settings, keep your camera on if feasible. Wear professional, tidy or business casual attire.
- **Be clean and tidy.** If working in a shared flexspace or drop-in space, keep your personal belongings in your personal space. Make sure that the environment is not cluttered and is cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- **Maintain meeting etiquette.** Try to always be on time for meetings. If you enter a meeting late or need to step out or away during the meeting, be courteous and avoid interrupting the flow of the meeting. In virtual meetings, mute yourself when you're not speaking, so that there is no unnecessary disturbance. If you need to take a call while in an in-person meeting, excuse yourself and step outside. If you need to take a call during a virtual meeting, excuse yourself before you answer it and then mute yourself.
- **Be flexible, respectful, and a team player.** Keep an open mind at work. Be flexible to new ideas, thoughts, and diverse perspectives. Understand that people are unique and have different learning, communication and working styles. Be professional and cordial in your interactions. Communicate with your teammates and if conflicts arise, manage or resolve them collaboratively.

DEFINITIONS

Flexwork: Also known as flexible work, is an arrangement that allows an employee designated as a hybrid or mobile worker to perform job duties at an alternate worksite that is not their primary Ramsey County facility, office, or project site on a regularly scheduled and recurring basis, as identified and approved by the appropriate supervisor or manager.

Hybrid worker: An employee whose work arrangement involves a combination of onsite and offsite workdays, which includes coming into a county facility, office, or project site to perform job duties at least twice per week.

Mobile worker: An employee who works primarily in a community-based environment and whose duties, which are primarily resident-facing, may be performed at multiple locations in a given week based on job function.

Primarily onsite worker: An employee whose job functions require them to be largely working at a Ramsey County facility, office or project site with occasional remote tasks, or an employee who voluntarily chooses to work onsite four days or more per week.

Flexspace: Workspace prioritized for use by hybrid- or mobile-designated employees in their primary county facility, office, or project site during their scheduled onsite workdays.

Drop-in space: A shared workspace available to employees at a Ramsey County facility, office, or project site for nonscheduled onsite work or meetings.

Alternate worksite: A place of work physically situated outside of a Ramsey County facility, office, or drop-in space, such as an employee's home.

Primary worksite: An employee's work location at a Ramsey County facility, office, or project site as designated in Summit. All employees, regardless of job classification or work arrangements, have a primary work facility.

Remote-first work environment: A countywide work status declared by the county manager in response to special or unique circumstances, in which employees under the hybrid or mobile designation may perform their work duties offsite. During this status, such employees are not expected to meet their onsite location requirements.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All flexworkers must:

1. Complete and keep up with any required employee trainings for flexworkers.
2. Work with their direct supervisor(s) to develop a flexwork arrangement with agreed upon expectations regarding performance and review. Performance expectations should include effective and consistent communication, the completion of job duties within the assigned timeframe, adherence to work schedules set forth by the supervisor, regular reporting, and compliance with departmental standards.
3. Follow [Workspace, Technology and Equipment for Use at Alternate Worksites](#) for setting up alternate worksites as appropriate.

During the days of the week when flexworkers perform their duties onsite, they must do so at a primary location approved by their supervisor. During the days of the week flexworkers perform their duties offsite, they may do so at a location of their own choosing without supervisor approval.

In the event of a “remote-first” work environment declaration by the County Manager, all impacted hybrid employees will be notified and may work offsite until given notice to return to their previous flexible work arrangements. Employees must ensure their contact information is up to date in [Summit](#) Self-Service to receive timely workplace alerts when needed.

Department managers and supervisors have the discretion to approve, on a case-by-case basis and for valid reasons, up to two weeks for individuals to work fully remotely. If a request to work remotely extends beyond two weeks and does not fall under a medical or reasonable accommodation [under the ADA](#), the employee must submit a [Request to Work Remotely on a Temporary Basis Form](#) to be reviewed for countywide consistency and parity. Any employee requests for more than two weeks of remote work must also be reviewed and approved by an Executive Team member and be submitted to flexibleworkplace@ramseycounty.us. Employees should send the completed form to their manager or supervisor 14 days in advance of their requested start date of remote work. This form is not for requesting remote work while on a medical-related absence or other leaves. For more information about accommodations, see **Requesting Reasonable Accommodations** below.

Department directors must ensure all employees in their department are informed of the scope and nature of this policy. Flexworkers and their supervisors are responsible for complying with

this policy. Failure to comply with this policy may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

The County Manager's Office is responsible for updating and maintaining this policy.

PROCEDURES

Supervisors must enter their employee's workplace designation into the Flexible Workplace Manager module in Summit and ensure that the information is up to date. Additional information is available in the [Flexible Workplace Guidance](#).

Eligibility

Employees are eligible to be flexworkers based on their job classification, primary function, and business need. Each job classification and function has been assigned one of three workplace designations: 1) onsite, 2) mobile, or 3) hybrid. Individuals with job classifications and functions with either a mobile or hybrid designation must meet the following criteria to qualify for a flexible workplace arrangement:

- Physical presence at a county facility or office is not essential to the success of the job function. Job duties can be successfully completed at an alternate worksite without disruption of services to residents, a reduction in efficiency and workflow, or communication and accountability to coworkers and management.
- In-person contact with residents at a county facility or office is not always required to provide a service or perform job duties.
- Work completed outside of county facilities and offices complies with state and federal laws regarding data privacy requirements.

Review of Employee Designation

An employee may ask their supervisor to review their existing designation and/or workplace arrangement at any time. Supervisors may modify an employee's work arrangements and must record any change to an employee's flexible workplace designation or primary worksite in the Flexible Workplace Manager module in Summit.

Data Privacy and Document Handling

Flexworkers must comply with all county policies, and state and federal laws for handling files, computer data, and other sensitive information:

- All files must be transferred to and from the office in a secure manner and not left unattended at any time.
- All files containing Ramsey County employees' or clients' sensitive data must be stored in a locked drawer, file cabinet, case, or other secured location that is inaccessible to others.
- It is recommended that flexworkers working from home maintain a dedicated workspace at home, if possible.
- The appropriate county-mandated secure log-on procedures must be used when accessing county systems (e.g., SSIS, MAXIS, MMIS) and any other private information databases. All users must log off these systems when not working at the computer.
- When working from at an offsite location, unauthorized individuals must be prevented from looking at computer data and files.
- All paper copies of private data or private health information printed at an alternate worksite must be kept in a secure location until they can be shredded sufficiently to make the text unreadable or disposed of in county secure shredding bins.
- Flexworkers must take all reasonable precautions to protect Ramsey County documents from theft, damage, or misuse. If county data is compromised, the employee must immediately notify their supervisor.
- In-person client meetings in an employee's home are prohibited. Work-related documents must not be sent via US Mail to an employee's home nor mailed from an employee's home.
- All work-related mail or confidential or private client documents printed remotely must be mailed from a secure site, which include the employee's office location, the US Post Office, or deposited into a Post Office box.
- Employees handling Federal Tax Information are subject to the same safeguard requirements and the highest level of attainable security as applicable to in-office employees.

Furniture, Technology and Equipment at Alternate Worksites

Mobile and hybrid employees will be provided with a laptop, bag, docking station, and wired headset with support from IS on these items, as outlined in [Workspace, Technology and Equipment for Use at Alternate Worksites](#) document that accompanies this policy. Under this policy, the installation of software device drivers is not allowed on county-owned laptops; at-home printing will not be supported; departments shall not pay for home internet connectivity; and employees should adhere to bandwidth minimum recommendations and hardware guidance as outlined in the [Flexible Workplace Home Office Hardware Guidelines](#). Exceptions or additional equipment requests require approval by the Chief Compliance and Ethics Office, Chief Information Security Officer, and Chief Financial Officer, and must be covered by the respective department's budget. Employees are responsible for establishing and maintaining an internet connection that is adequate for performing their job functions at their home, if it is used as an alternate worksite. The county is not responsible for network hardware or difficulties due to service provider issues or the use of incompatible equipment.

Home Office and Connectivity Stipend

To support a flexible work environment, eligible employees will be approved for a one-time \$500 home office and connectivity stipend. This stipend is intended to help offset the cost of setting up the home office, including furniture (e.g., chairs) and technology (e.g., monitors). The payment is subject to taxes. Employees are eligible if they meet all of the following criteria:

- (1) Designated as hybrid or mobile under this policy and work at a county facility or office fewer than four days a week.
- (2) Eligible for insurance benefits.
- (3) Work at least 40 hours per two-week pay period.

Stipends are conditioned upon completion of all of the following:

- (1) Completion of the Flexible Workplace Policy Training
- (2) Return of furniture, equipment, and technology taken home during the pandemic, not including the standard equipment provided to all flexworkers (laptop, laptop bags, docking stations, wired headsets, and for those handling sensitive data, locking pedestal files). The only exceptions are keyboards, mice, and power cords, which can continue to be used at home, but need to be logged.

- (3) Completion of the [Furniture, Technology and Equipment Form](#) (see “Tracking Technology and Equipment at Alternate Worksites” below).

Tracking Technology and Equipment at Alternate Worksites

Employees must obtain management approval prior to transferring county-issued furniture, technology and/or equipment to an alternate worksite. Supervisors and managers must document all county property that employees are using at alternate worksites in the [Furniture, Technology and Equipment Form](#). This includes the technology and equipment provided to all flexworkers (laptop, laptop bags, docking stations, wired headsets, and locking pedestal files). Supervisors and managers must maintain the log on a regular basis or whenever there is a change in the items an employee is using off-site. Ramsey County-provided equipment and office supplies remain the property of the county and are to be used only for work-related purposes. Employees who are issued technology equipment by Ramsey County must comply with the [Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy](#). If employees are voluntarily or involuntarily terminated from the County, they are responsible for returning all technology and equipment back to their manager/supervisor within their respective departments.

Employees are responsible for the transport of furniture, technology and equipment and for at-home set-up, while exercising caution and good judgment when lifting and transporting items. See Ramsey County’s [Office Ergonomics](#) for guidance on ergonomic workstation setups.

Requesting Reasonable Accommodations

Requests for reasonable accommodations under the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) needed to perform job duties at a county facility or worksite due to disability or medical (including pregnancy-related) reasons will be received and evaluated on an individual case-by-case basis consistent with state and federal law.

Employees seeking accommodations are encouraged to speak with a supervisor or manager in their department, their department’s ADA Liaison or their [Human Resources Business Partner](#). Complex situations should be referred to the County’s ADA Coordinator. Although not required to do so, an employee may complete the [Request for Job or Workplace Modification Form](#) and submit it to their supervisor or their department ADA Liaison. Human Resources will work with the employee and supervisor through an interactive process where needed to determine if an employee’s request can be granted and the employee can be accommodated without causing an undue hardship.

AUTHORITY

This policy was authorized by the County Manager:

- [Home Rule Charter, Sec. 3.02 - Powers and Duties of the County Manager](#)
- [Administrative Code, Chapter 3.30.00 - Powers and Duties of the County Manager](#)

LINKS AND RESOURCES

- [Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- [Flexible Workplace Home Office Hardware Guidelines](#)
- [Flexible Workplace webpage](#)
- [Furniture, Technology and Equipment Form](#)
- [Mission, Vision, Goals and Values](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety](#)
- [Office Ergonomics](#)
- [Residents First Strategic Priority](#)
- [Strategic Facilities Plan](#)
- [Workplace Standards Policy](#)
- [Workspace, Technology and Equipment for Use at Alternate Worksites](#)
- [Workplace Incident Reports](#)
- [Workers Compensation](#)

CONTACTS / SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

Compliance and Ethics Office

- Data Compliance Manager: [651-266-8000](#)
- Health Care Compliance Manager: [651-266-8000](#)

Property Management

- Property Management Director: [651-266-2262](#)

Human Resources

- Safety and Occupational Health: [651-266-2929](#)
- Disability and Leave of Absence Administration: [651-266-2729](#)
- Human Resources Business Partners: [651-266-2700](#) or [HR Business Partner](#)
- Labor Relations Manager: [651-266-2728](#)

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Brief description of change	Revision approval
Nov. 1, 2021	Initial policy	Ryan O'Connor
Apr. 19, 2022	Added definition of primarily onsite worker and flexspace, added section on professional etiquette, and updated section on technology, equipment, and furniture.	Ryan O'Connor
Apr. 29, 2022	Updated applicability section, requirements on the Furniture, Equipment and Technology at Alternate Worksites section, and eligibility for home and connectivity office stipends.	Ryan O'Connor
May 9, 2022	Updated requirements for employees handling Federal Tax Information.	Johanna Berg
Aug. 11, 2022	Revised and updated information on returning and logging furniture, technology, and equipment; use of drop-in space; and requests to work remotely on temporary basis.	Johanna Berg
Nov. 27, 2023	Revised and clarified eligibility criteria for Home Office and Connectivity Stipend. Added reference to Severe Weather Policy and Procedure and Flexible Workplace Manager module. Removed language specific to initial policy implementation.	Ryan O'Connor

APPROVAL

Ryan O'Connor
County Manager
November 1, 2021