

Working Remotely Program

Human Resources
March 3, 2022

Working Remotely Program

Mission Statement

As the City of Medicine Hat ("City") advances towards increased customer service & financial sustainability the City will take strides to incorporate modern workplace trends through diverse methods which includes a Work Remote Program to assist in increased productivity, customer service continuity, employee retention, future employee recruitment and commercial footprint cost reduction.

Objectives of the Working Remotely Program (WRP)

1. For the City, opportunities for working remotely program include but are not limited to:
 - a. Broader workplace options and flexibility to enhance the City's ability to attract and retain the 'best fit' employees.
 - b. Having less reliance on traditional office/workplace facilities accommodates a reduction in real estate required for City services or functions.
 - c. Improved continuity and sustainability of services during crisis events.
2. Workplace technology and process improvements enable virtual office connection outside the traditional workplace. Business and employee interest merge as a flexible option that has cost savings. With organizations facing various economic and pandemic-like challenges, remote work arrangements provide a sustainable alternative for continuity of service(s).

WRP Overview

The City of Medicine Hat is committed to providing a productive, healthy, safe, and flexible work environment for its staff. This includes work sites and spaces that may be within a City of Medicine Hat facility, a mobile resource, a remote (non-City facility) location or an employee's home office. Employees may be required to work remotely and/or requested to participate in the Working Remotely Program (WRP) on either full or part-time basis.

1. The WRP is part of an ongoing evolution in providing flexible workplace programs and alternatives to fixed work locations.
2. All WRP approval decisions must account for operational requirements of the department and employee including impacts to the public, customers, contractors and other team members. Further, the City's business should provide the same or enhanced level of service when implementing the WRP.
3. As approved by the director, the City of Medicine Hat may provide an employee with the necessary technology, equipment, and/or software.

Scope

The Working Remotely Program is applicable to City of Medicine Hat employees.

Responsibility

Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

1. Approve Working Remotely Program Guidelines and subsequent amendments.
2. Review annual summary report on program and provide direction on future program changes.
3. Provide direction on opportunities arising from the Working Remotely Program such as City building space rationalization.

Directors

1. Review and decide on employee WRP applications based on specific conditions associated with the position and team circumstances, such as:
 - a. the suitability for a remote work arrangement of employees and their respective positions,
 - b. the work schedule and in-office work rotations relative to team engagement and effectiveness,
 - c. potential fatigue issues relating to remote work, and
 - d. work productivity and customer service effectiveness.
2. Recommend space optimization to respective Managing Director where appropriate.
3. Collaborate with HR to support strong employee and team performance and cohesion.
4. Collaborate with IT to create touch down stations for employees when working in the office.
5. Situations with special circumstances should be forwarded by the director through the Managing Director to the City Manager for considerations and approval.

Human Resources

1. Assist with relevant skill development for participants and leaders involved in the WRP.
2. Collaborate with Corporate Communications on the preparation and execution of a communication plan related to the WRP.
3. Conduct an annual review with WRP participants, peers and participating supervisors and present to the SLT for consideration direction from ELT.

Employees

Employees approved/assigned for WRP will:

1. Abide by the City of Medicine Hat's employment terms and conditions, as well as the applicable collective agreement
2. Adhere to all City of Medicine Hat guidelines, relevant dress-code(s), policies and procedures and legislative requirements
3. Be available during their regularly scheduled hours of work and maintain productive work habits during these hours
4. Be responsible for the costs of sufficiently reliable remote/home internet service, the purchase of modems or routers required for sufficiently reliable internet connectivity and home-based office furniture
5. Be responsible for adhering to the Information Management, Privacy and Data Security Policy
6. Use approved repositories to store information when working remotely
7. Maintain the remote workspace in a safe condition, free from hazards, and other dangers to the employee and equipment
8. Be able to travel to and attend as required regularly scheduled in-office rotations, required office meetings and site visits or department events. Employees will not receive travel reimbursement costs for travel from their remote work location to meetings or site visits
9. Ensure office equipment and supplies provided by the City are solely for business purposes and returned when the WRP ends for the employee
10. Inform his or her director (or delegate) if there are changes to the home space that was approved under the WRP application (i.e., renovations, relocation)

Application Process and Guidelines

Application Process

1. Employees who wish to work remotely apply for the WRP through their director, using the on-line WRP application found within OnBase.
2. Where the City requires employees to work remotely, the employee's director (or designate) will initiate the application process.
3. The director decides whether to approve or deny the application and notifies the employee and respective management, including the rationale.
4. WRP applications may be reconsidered as organizational needs or job responsibilities change.

Employee Guidelines

5. Before making an application to the WRP, the following must be considered by the employee:

- a. A specific home space available for dedicated work that allows for privacy and security of City equipment
- b. Internet access with an appropriate level of speed
- c. A productive and ergonomic work environment, including availability for phone calls and/or video conference meetings
- d. Dependent care for family members and/or pets during regular working hours
- e. A safe work environment
- f. Sufficient electrical outlets and/or surge protectors
- g. Telephone connection, landline or mobile

Definitions

- 6. **Full-time Program:** Employee works all scheduled hours in a remote work location regardless of whether the employee's employment status is full or part-time.
- 7. **Part-time Program:** Employee works a combination of scheduled hours per week in a remote work location (e.g. employee works two days a week from a remote work location) and rotates into in-office work the other days of the week.
- 8. **Other:** Periodic requests to work remotely may be approved by the employee's supervisor and do not fall under the WRP (e.g. work remotely one or two instances per month).
- 9. **Workspace:** This area of the home dedicated to the remote workspace with a desk, chair and any other related furnishings (e.g. filing cabinet). Photographs or video recordings are primarily concerned with this immediate area of the workspace.

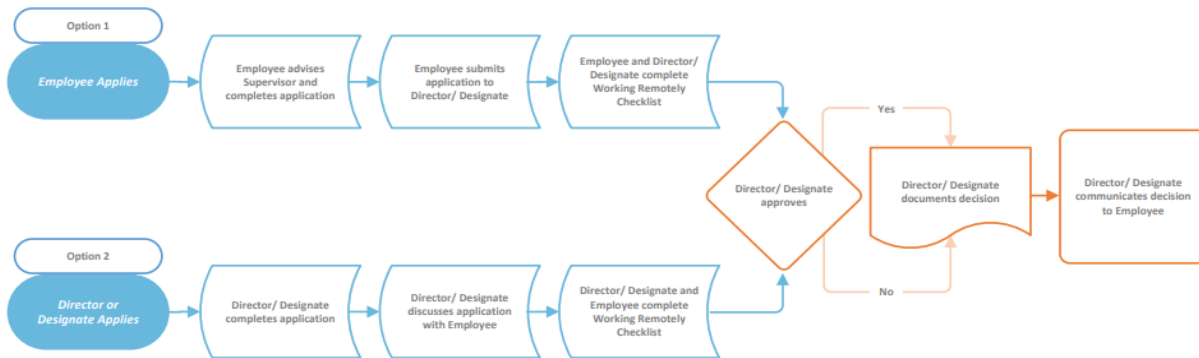
Management Guidelines

Director (or delegate) will:

- 1. Complete their portion of the WRP application after reviewing with the employee and respective supervisor/manager.
- 2. Ensure that supervision of employees in the WRP is of essentially the same manner and nature as employees in traditional City workplaces/sites. Supervisors/Managers will:
 - a. Provide clear and concise direction by managing objectives and expected results with well-defined deliverables, quality and timeline expectations
 - b. Monitor productivity through the completion of tasks, projects or outcomes and by setting regularly scheduled reviews
 - c. Establish a check-in system, at least weekly, with the employee
 - d. Monitor employee performance in alignment with City of Medicine Hat Leading Human Performance program
 - e. Assess the success of the WRP arrangement and, if issues arise, troubleshoot solutions with the employee

- f. Keep the director apprised of any issues and identify recommendations for resolution
- g. Review and modify or terminate the arrangement in the event the WRP arrangement is not working effectively
- h. Ensure the terms and conditions of employment with The City of Medicine Hat or the collective agreement are understood and adhered to by all parties.

Working Remotely Program
Application Process



Tools Supporting the WRP

3. [WRP application](#) (Please open this link from the word document. It will not work if you click it in the PDF.)

Or open OnBase (Unity Client) and click "Forms" (across the top). Select "Working Remotely Program" from the side menu to complete the form.

Program Guidelines

1. All terms and conditions of employment, provisions outlined in the collective agreement(s), and the application of all City of Medicine Hat policies, programs, and pertinent legislation will continue to apply to all employees approved under the WRP.
2. Appointments and meetings with work-related visitors, colleagues, contractors, suppliers, and partners must be conducted at a City of Medicine Hat facility.
3. WRP arrangements can be combined with other flexible work options (e.g. Earned Day Off).
4. Employees are responsible for determining and absorbing any income tax implications for designating a remote workplace in their home and for accurately reporting home office use for tax purposes.

5. Employees are responsible for covering all loss, damage, or unusual wear of employee-owned equipment, software, and other employee-provided assets.
6. Employees are responsible to ensure that the WRP arrangement (i.e. operating a home office) does not breach the terms of her or his household insurance policies, residential mortgages, rental or lease agreements.
7. If employees experience a system, network, internet or electrical power failure, they are expected to make alternative arrangements to continue with their work duties (e.g. return to office).

Special Circumstances

8. Applications for remote work should include consideration of team effectiveness, engagement and cohesion, the ability to uphold work quality and service levels, the ability to readily accommodate face-to-face work when required (e.g. for project work) and the ability to have a regular, in-office rotation regardless of home location.
9. Extraneous circumstances warranting additional authorization by the Managing Director and City Manager include, for example, cases where an employee will reside outside of a half day drive from work (e.g. to attend a meeting in Medicine Hat), where an employee's title is at manager level or higher and when parts of #8 above cannot be fulfilled.

Worker's Compensation

10. Employees may be covered under workers' compensation (WCB) legislation depending on the circumstances of the event causing the injury.
11. When coverage is in effect, the employers' responsibilities under workers' compensation legislation (including recording and reporting accidents) apply even though the work is performed from a remote location such as the employee's home.
12. Any work-related injury occurring in a remote work location will be reported following the City WCB reporting policy and guidelines.

Health, Safety & Environment

13. The employee will adhere to the City's Health, Safety and Environment System.
14. The City and employee will conduct a hazard assessment in advance of the Employee working in accordance with the WRP.
15. The employee agrees to maintain a designated workspace that is safe and free from hazards and other dangers.
16. If requested the employee agrees to provide a photographic record to display the overall layout of the remote workspace including the desk, chair and access to power sources, as well as define the designated workspace. This record may be in lieu of an in-person inspection and hazard assessment.
 - a. The employee agrees that joint on-site safety and suitability visits by the City may be performed prior to the commencement of the WRP arrangement, and then on a periodic basis as the City may deem necessary, with advance notice.

17. The employee assesses his/her ergonomic needs in relation to the employee's remote workspace using the ergonomic self-assessment tool (go to INsite/Human Resources/Ergonomic Self-Assessment). The employee may be responsible for replacing the desk and chair as required to maintain ergonomic requirements.

Liability

18. The City of Medicine Hat is not liable for loss, destruction or injury suffered by family members or visitors of an employee, or others, if such loss, destruction or injury occurs within or near the employee's remote workplace.
19. The City of Medicine Hat assumes no liability for non-job-related injuries of the employee occurring in the remote workplace whether they occur during or outside the scheduled work hours.

Costs and Expenses

20. Approval of and costs associated with the set-up or on-going operation of City-issued property will be determined in conjunction with the WRP approval and will be based on each employee's remote workplace situation and job responsibilities.
21. The employee may be responsible for all assets belonging to the City that are used in the WRP arrangement, and may be responsible for the replacement value of those assets that cannot be accounted for.
22. The employee will ensure that the designated work space is free from hazards that could cause or contribute to damage or destruction of City property used for the purposes of the WRP arrangement.
23. The City of Medicine Hat may cover reasonable and verifiable costs associated with business related expenses such as office supplies, couriers (excepting charges for delivery between the remote workplace and City facilities), long distance phone calls, and if necessary other pre-approved operational costs.
24. Employees are responsible for initial and on-going expenses related to their remote workplace including internet hook-up, insurance, utilities, taxes, furniture, heating/cooling, equipment, and / or expenses to set up a remote workplace that complies with the City of Medicine Hat's health & safety, technology, and communication policies and guidelines.

Technology Support

City policies for internet use remain in effect, see adherence to policies under Employee Guidelines, item 5.

25. Information Technology will only respond to IT support problems for City of Medicine Hat computing devices.
26. Employees are required to bring City of Medicine Hat technology to the IT office for all maintenance and support activities.

Termination/Suspension of the WRP

27. The director determines the cancellation of the WRP arrangement in his or her sole discretion.
28. Written notice of cancellation must be given 30 days prior to the cancellation date, subject to #30 below.
29. The director may notify IT to cancel remote access and/or cell phone (if applicable) and may direct the employee to return all City-owned property that was supplied to the employee for the purposes of the WRP.
30. A WRP arrangement may be suspended without notice for reasons including but not limited to:
 - a. If there are safety or security issues associated with the remote workplace
 - b. If there are performance issues requiring close monitoring and sustained improvement
 - c. If strike action is threatened by the employee's Collective Bargaining Unit

Program Contacts

For more information on the Working Remotely Program, approaches to monitoring productivity or leading virtual teams, contact a member of the Human Resources at hr@medicinehat.ca.