COVID-19
Remote Work Guidelines
Remote Work Guidelines

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USC offers Remote Work (RW), in certain circumstances, to balance the operational needs of the University with the personal needs of its faculty, staff, or student workers. While remote work in a non-pandemic environment is optional, the expectation in the COVID-19 environment is that faculty, staff, or student workers will continue to work remotely unless the work cannot be completed off-site. All faculty, staff, or student workers who continue to work remotely will be expected to abide by the guidelines included below and the Remote Work Policy.

See the memo, “Information for Faculty about Returning to Work in Person on Campus” for faculty-specific policies that govern if there is any contradiction with these guidelines or other documents. While faculty are not required to have a Remote Work Letter of Agreement, and the terms “employee” and “supervisor” are not apt for faculty relations, to keep the wording of this guidelines document as simple as possible, “supervisor” refers to anyone who has direct reports including deans of faculty and department chairs. “Employee” refers to faculty, staff, and student workers.

Remote Work Letter of Agreement

All staff or student workers working from home must complete the RW approval process, which includes executing a USC-issued Remote Work Letter of Agreement (RWA). The agreement states the terms and conditions for the RW arrangement. For faculty, generally no request will be necessary to work at home, but faculty should ensure their department chair or dean is aware that they are working remotely. See the memo, “Information for Faculty about Returning to Work in Person on Campus.”

Executing the Remote Work Letter of Agreement

The RWA can be accessed on the Manager Gateway.

- Employees who would like to request working from home must initiate the RWA process at least 30 days prior to starting remote work
  - Employees currently working remotely due to COVID-19 without an RWA (either from their department or school) must submit the University’s agreement to their supervisor by September 30, 2020 for their approval. Please reach out to HR Partners if you have concerns about this timing.
  - For employees working under a current RWA specific to a department, that agreement will be valid through December 31, 2020, after which the agreement will need to transition to the USC RWA. If these employees would like to continue to work from home, they must submit the USC RWA by January 30, 2021.
  - Agreements using the USC RWA will be valid for three months to one year, although as per the Remote Work Policy, RWA agreements are always at the discretion of the department, so it is possible that
employees may be asked to return to an office location before the agreement expires.

- After approving the RWA, supervisors must send it to the HR Partner for approval. HR Partners must sign the RWA and upload the agreement to the employee’s Workday file by the time the RWA is scheduled to begin.

**Services/Equipment Expenses**

**Technology Stipend**

During the period when employees work from home, USC will provide a monthly stipend to cover a percentage of the cell phone, internet, and other technology expenses that may be generated by working from home.

- Full-time employee receives $53 per month
- Part-time employee receives $26.50 per month

Note that employees who receive a monthly mobile allowance or who have a University-issued cell phone with a working data/hot spot will generally not be eligible for the stipend.

Employees who believe that the stipend does not cover the reasonable costs they actually incur must maintain accurate records of such charges and submit them via the approved channels as per the University’s Reimbursements policy.

**Other Equipment Expenses**

Cost for associated expenses (e.g., installing computers, phone lines, recurring expenses, repair, and/or support) must be pre-approved by the employee’s supervisor and must be in accordance with the University’s Reimbursements policy.

**Responsibilities**

Both the employee and supervisor should carefully consider the impact of remote work on the employee’s position, including the consequences of less face-to-face interaction, fewer professional connections, fewer opportunities for teambuilding, etc. For the remote work to succeed for everyone, responsibilities must be clearly understood by all parties:

**Employee Responsibilities**

- Consider their own needs, work conditions, and the type of RWA that would meet their needs
• Inform their supervisor in a timely manner of the need for an RWA, any known
For staff and students, challenges to having a RWA, and suggestions to address those challenges; Remain open to feedback and changes to a RW request
• Conduct a home office inspection and review the Remote Work Safety Checklist. Any corrections required by that inspection are solely the employee’s responsibility.
  o If there are ergonomic concerns, the employee should consider conducting an ergonomic self-evaluation. If additional evaluation is needed, employees can schedule a virtual evaluation with Occupational Health. At this time, USC Environmental Health and Safety is covering the cost of the occupational health evaluation.
• Be aware that tax implications related to off-site work are their own responsibility. Employees are advised to consult a tax professional. Additionally, employees should be aware that undertaking a remote work arrangement does not automatically make the commute to a USC location an approved “business trip.”
• Adhere to all University policies, including but not limited to compliance and privacy policies such as HIPAA, FERPA, etc.
• Comply with University Information Technology security guidelines and minimize the likelihood of USC equipment, records, or materials being used for non-USC business purposes
• Minimize the risk of accidental access, use, modification, destruction, or disclosure of USC information, or unauthorized access, use, modification, or destruction of USC property
• Communicate with their supervisor to ensure they are meeting expectations and satisfactorily performing work assignments
• Continue to fulfill all job responsibilities and conditions of employment, and adhere to USC policies, procedures, and guidelines, including maintaining a regular workload
• For non-exempt employees, accurately document time worked, including overtime where appropriate, and requested days off in the appropriate system of record (e.g., Workday)
• Commit to adhering to any health and safety trainings and/or symptom screenings as required by USC prior to returning to campus for any reason

Please note that failure to fulfill these responsibilities may result in the cancellation of the RWA or disciplinary action.

Supervisor Responsibilities for Staff and Students

• Operational needs should be evaluated prior to approving RWAs
  o A justification may be required to the supervisor and HR Partner with specific rationale as to why an RWA cannot be accommodated for the employee
• Clearly communicate defined tasks and expectations, measure performance through clearly defined metrics and behavior, and provide regular feedback on work performance
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- Review RWA efficacy on a regular basis by evaluating the individual’s performance, responsibilities, and work style, while remaining focused on the benefits derived by supporting RW
- Ensure employees receive the appropriate technology reimbursements, and equipment needed to safely and effectively perform their duties (in collaboration with the appropriate HR Partner and Senior Business Officer)
- Direct employees to ensure compliance with all relevant University policies and security guidelines
- Provide annual performance reviews and apply salary increases fairly, regardless of their work location, in accordance with the University’s policies and procedures

Remote Work for Out-Of-State Employees

If an employee proposes an RWA outside of California, the supervisor and the employee should consult with the following entities to consider issues that may arise:

- **Payroll Services:**
  - Continuing USC employees who worked in California during Spring 2020 and are now “temporarily remote” in another state due to COVID disruption will continue to be paid California wages for the purpose of state tax withholding and remittance, as if they were still located in the state.
  - Continuing USC employees who indicate they have permanently relocated to another state will be paid wages based on the state in which they reside and work, as per law.
  - New employees who have not worked in the state of California in 2020 must be paid as out-of-state employees for the purpose of state tax withholding and remittance, based on the state in which they are residing and working.

- **HR Partner and University HR:** Any employee whose primary worksite is located outside the state of California is subject to all employment-related laws of the state in which they work

- **Benefits:** Some employees’ benefit plans may be affected (some medical plans are limited to California providers, etc.)

Please note that USC is not authorized to do business in every state; thus, any RWA arrangement involving out-of-state employment may be delayed or denied.

All out-of-state work arrangements require an additional approval from both the Office of General Counsel and central Payroll Services.

**Contacts**

Please direct any questions regarding these guidelines to the HR Service Center at uschr@usc.edu or (213) 821-8100.
Reviewed by:
Office of Human Resources
Office of the Provost
Office of the General Counsel
ADA 504 Coordinator