



# TOWN OF NANTUCKET

## TOWN ADMINISTRATION

### **Telecommuting Policy**

*Effective date: May 1, 2016*

*Applicability: This policy applies to Town employees on a case by case basis. This policy does not apply to School Department Employees.*

#### *I. Purpose.*

This policy establishes rules and procedures for identifying eligibility for Town of Nantucket employees to telecommute as well as for the use of telecommuting.

#### *II. Definitions.*

Telecommuting is a form of telework, which is the use of telecommunications technology to work from any remote location. In most instances, it is the act of working from home or a remote location other than the assigned work location, thus eliminating travel to and from an office. There are very few jobs where it would be practical to telecommute five (5) days per week. Some jobs, however, have tasks that could be accomplished while telecommuting one to two (1-2) days per week or on an ad hoc, project-specific basis.

These tasks may include, but are not limited to: auditing reports; batch work; calculating; computer programming; data entry; editing; planning; reading; procurement; project management; research; spreadsheets; bookkeeping/budgeting; word processing and writing (documentation and technical writing).

Generally, jobs suitable for telecommuting will have defined tasks with clearly measurable results with limited need for face-to-face interaction. Ultimately, whether or not management decides to utilize telecommuting as an option will depend on the operational needs of the Department.

#### *III. Background.*

Not every position is eligible for telecommuting, however on Nantucket where the island's remote location makes the challenge of recruiting and hiring essential employees with required credentials or certifications very difficult, telecommuting is often requested as a viable

temporary solution . Clear expectations and measurable tasks are essential components in considering whether or not telecommuting would be an option. Management must supervise telecommuting employees by developing a system of distributing work appropriate for telecommuting and designating tasks with measurable outputs that can ensure appropriate levels of employee accountability.

There are benefits and limitations to telecommuting.

*Benefits of telecommuting can include:*

- Improved employee retention and recruitment
- Increased productivity (including better time management and work quality)
- Temporary solution to housing challenges unique to the island
- Improved employee morale (including reduced stress and a better work/family balance)
- Reduced use of sick or personal time among employees

*Limitations of telecommuting can include:*

- Collective bargaining for unionized positions
- Disconnection from the mission of the organization
- The potential for distractions at home
- Reduced exposure and interaction with coworkers
- Lack of supervisory control
- Difficulty in locating telecommuters during work hours
- Should not be a substitute for primary childcare or eldercare arrangements

#### *IV. Policy.*

##### *i. Management Rights*

Telecommuting is not appropriate or possible for all employees. No employee is entitled to, or guaranteed the opportunity to, telecommute. Offering the opportunity to work at home or a remote location is a management decision, based on the discretion of the employee's Cabinet/Department Head, with final approval by the Town Manager is required.

##### *ii. Eligibility*

Non-union positions are eligible to telecommute at the discretion of the supervising Cabinet/Department Head, with written approval of the Town Manager. Unionized positions are not eligible for telecommuting without prior approval from the respective union, and subsequent approval of the supervising Cabinet/Department Head, with written approval of the Town Manager. Telecommuting is not subject to grievance procedures.

##### *iii. Requests to Telecommute*

Requests to telecommute must be made in writing by the employee to the employee's Cabinet/Department Head with employee's current job description attached. It is required that a first-time telecommuter be reviewed after the first three (3) months to evaluate the success of the arrangement, and reviewed periodically (minimum two times per year) thereafter as part of the appraisal process. The review may result in discontinuation of the telecommuting agreement. Unsatisfactory performance will be handled in accordance with the Personnel Policies and/or Collective Bargaining Agreement, if applicable. All telecommuting agreements must meet the

criteria in this policy and may be terminated at any time by either the telecommuter or the Town of Nantucket. It is recommended, however, that 15 days notice be given, if possible.

*iv. Work Space Requirements and Expectations*

Telecommuters are responsible for maintaining a safe and ergonomic working environment, including the work area, bathroom, and other areas that may require access during the workday. The duties, obligations, and responsibilities of a telecommuter are the same as those of an employee at the centrally located worksite. Telecommuters are not permitted to entertain Town employees or those doing business with the Town in his/her remote location.

Telecommuters are expected to participate in all Town/Department meetings and other meetings as needed and/or requested by his/her supervisor. The Town will provide the needed technology to enable such participation. Telecommuting is not a solution for day care or dependent care. A telecommuter will not carry out dependent care or personal responsibilities in a manner that interferes with the successful performance of his or her job responsibilities.

The telecommuter will maintain the confidentiality of Town of Nantucket and related information and documents, prevent unauthorized access to any information, set up password protection, and dispose of work-related documents in a manner that will not jeopardize the interests of the Town in accordance with the Town's Computer Use Policy.

Telecommuters will keep a daily log as to when they start and end their work day. The telecommuter will also notate when s/he takes her/his lunch break, any other break or time away from the home office. Time away from the office is to include doctor's appointments or any other time spent away from the office. The telecommuter's weekly time sheet should be a direct reflection of time spent in and out of the office during the predetermined regularly scheduled hours of work.

*v. Costs and Reimbursements*

Unless otherwise agreed upon and approved by the Town, costs of telecommuting will be absorbed by the employee. This includes commuting costs to/from Nantucket, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Town Manager. The Town does not reimburse for office space or "home office", including rent, telephone lines, internet, faxes, cell phones, and furniture, unless specifically approved by the Town of Nantucket for employee use.

Reasonable office supplies will be reimbursed when approved by the Cabinet/Department Head. This includes any supplies for a printer or fax previously owned by the telecommuter but now used for Town of Nantucket work. Work-related phone charges may be reimbursed if documented and submitted in a timely manner and approved by the Cabinet/Department Head. Telecommuters are expected to work from home. If, for some reason, working from home is not an option, telecommuters are responsible for paying their own rental charges.

*vi. Travel*

All business-related travel for telecommuters for approved travel to meetings and conferences elsewhere shall follow the procedures outlined in the Town of Nantucket's travel policy. Commuting costs to and from Nantucket are not reimbursed, unless previously agreed to in writing by the Town.

*vii. Hardware and Software*

Although a telecommuter's need for specialized material or equipment should be minimal, the Town shall provide equipment (hardware and software) and services (such as technical support) as needed. New or existing laptop computers and other computer equipment shall be provided on an as-needed basis. All equipment provided to the telecommuter shall be used by the Town of Nantucket employee only and for Town-related work only. All provided equipment must be returned to the Town of Nantucket's IT Department as soon as the telecommuting agreement ends.

The employee will consult with Nantucket IT support staff to ensure that the hardware and software used by telecommuters conforms to Nantucket's technology policies.

*ix. Use of Benefit Time*

Benefit leave time normally scheduled during a telecommuter's scheduled workday must be arranged with the employee's supervisor in the same manner as it is for employees on island. Travel time to/from the employee's home and Nantucket is not paid.

Telecommuters shall not receive paid leave when Town buildings close for localized emergencies as snow days. However, the Town will grant paid leave to a telecommuter for region-specific emergencies, such as hurricanes and officially declared snow emergencies.

End.