



## **CITY OF NEW BRAUNFELS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**PROCEDURE(S): REMOTE WORK**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: OCTOBER 1, 2022**

**REVISION DATE(S): JUNE 3, 2024**

### **REMOTE WORK**

The City of New Braunfels strives to attract and retain a diverse and talented work force by providing a work environment in which a team member can achieve a high level of performance. Our goal is to meet the needs of the City and the residents we serve, while supporting work-life flexibility for our team members. Identifying appropriate remote work arrangements is intended to improve productivity and job performance, reduce traffic and commuting costs, support continuity of operations plans, and improve team member morale. Where appropriate and subject to position and department requirements, the City may allow a team member to work remotely, not to exceed one day per week. The City of New Braunfels considers remote working to be a viable, flexible work option when both the team member and the job duties are suited to such an arrangement.

This policy defines guidelines and requirements for establishing and effectively managing remote work arrangements. Remote working may be appropriate and viable for some positions and team members, but not for others, and is not a benefit or an entitlement. Department Directors may implement remote work arrangements where appropriate for eligible team members. Managers reporting directly to the Deputy City Manager (DCM) or Assistant City Manager (ACM) should seek approval from their respective supervisor. The City may make changes to and/or end a remote work arrangement at any time at its discretion. Allowing the option to work remotely is intended to create flexible conditions that will help team members accomplish their work effectively without disruption to City of New Braunfels services during non-emergency work periods and during the period leading up to, throughout, and/or immediately after emergency events.

#### **A. Scope**

1. This policy allows for eligible City team members to work remotely for a portion of their scheduled work week hours, not to exceed one day per week. Additional days can be requested under extenuating circumstances and will be reviewed by the City Manager's Office for potential approval.
2. Requirements for remote working arrangements set forth in this policy are to ensure compliance with applicable laws and provide for the safety of team members participating in a remote work arrangement.
3. A remote work arrangement in no way changes the requirements or expectations of employment



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with the City of New Braunfels. The duties, responsibilities, and conditions of employment remain the same as if the team member were working at their normal work site. The City of New Braunfels policies and procedures continue to apply while working at an alternate location.

4. A remote work arrangement is a mutually agreed upon work alternative between the City and the team member. The process of being approved for a remote work arrangement begins with the team member and their manager or supervisor discussing a remote work schedule, and completion and approval of the Remote Work Agreement. Remote work schedules are approved by the Department Director and City Management.
5. A remote work arrangement for a team member should not affect the workload or productivity of others either by shifting burdens or creating delays in the workflow. A supervisor may request or require a measure of productivity if appropriate, such as an end of day recap, spreadsheet, etc.
6. A remote work arrangement will not affect a team member's compensation, benefits, work status or work responsibilities or result in any additional cost to the City. The City is not financially responsible for the costs associated with the initial set-up or continued use of the team member's off-site work location, such as remodeling, furnishings, etc.
7. Remote work assignments of any duration will not be considered a Transitional Duty and/or Modified Duty accommodation.

### B. Eligibility

Remote work arrangements are subject to the business requirements of the department and the City. These arrangements may not be suitable in every department or for particular positions within a department. In emergency situations, the City Manager or their designee may authorize the establishment of temporary remote work arrangements for otherwise ineligible work groups and/or team members to work remotely for safety reasons during a weather event or public health emergency.

Directors and City Management should consider the following when reviewing a request for a remote work arrangement for a team member and consult with the Human Resources Department should they have questions or require assistance in considering a request:

1. The duties and responsibilities of the team member's job are such that they can be effectively fulfilled while the team member works away from City premises.



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2. The remote work schedule will not adversely affect the ability of other team members to perform their jobs.
3. The remote work schedule will continue to provide adequate on-site staffing to respond to citizens, customers, and stakeholders.
4. Whether their primary job functions require daily face-to-face interactions with the public.
5. Whether the team member has recently demonstrated attendance, conduct, or performance related problems.
6. Whether the team member's job requires frequent access to material that cannot or should not be moved from City premises and does not require special facilities or equipment that cannot or should not be moved from City premises.

Directors must ensure that remote work decisions are made for appropriate, non-discriminatory reasons and should direct all questions to Human Resources. The City may, at any time, deny, limit, suspend, or terminate a team member's remote work arrangement. When possible, Directors should provide reasonable advance notice to the team member when modifying or terminating a regularly scheduled remote work arrangement. Work arrangements will be reevaluated annually to ensure the arrangement is still working appropriately for the Department and team member, and can be completed by submitting the [Remote Work Agreement](#).

### C. Procedures

1. A team member or their supervisor or manager may initiate the consideration of a remote work arrangement for the team member.
2. All remote work arrangements must be approved in advance by the department's Director and City Management, as applicable.
3. Managers/supervisors and participating team members should discuss and ensure mutual understanding of expectations for team members participating in a remote work arrangement, such as, but not limited to work-schedule, timekeeping, availability for virtual meetings, preferred methods of communications, etc.
4. A Department may develop and implement department specific remote work guidelines for staff based on their unique department requirements.
5. Once a Remote Work Agreement is received, Human Resources will file the Remote Work Agreement in the team member's personnel file.



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### **D. General Provisions for Remote Working**

#### **1. Accessibility to Team Members**

All team members working remotely must be accessible by phone, Teams, email, etc. during their entire work period. In certain extenuating circumstances team members may be required to come into the office during their scheduled remote workday(s).

#### **2. Security and Confidential Information**

Consistent with the organization's expectations of information security for team members working at the office, remote working team members will be held to a higher standard and be expected to ensure the protection of City information accessible from their home office. Steps may include securing documents, confidential or protected information, locking your computer screen when not in use and any other measures appropriate for the job and the work environment. Access to the City's network is only permissible using a City issued device, i.e., laptop. Staff may not access the City's network using their personal devices, such as a personal computer, laptop, or tablet device.

#### **3. Safety**

Team members are expected to maintain their home or other alternative workspace in a safe manner, free from safety hazards just as is required in the city workplace. Remote working team members are responsible for notifying the Human Resources Department of any injury occurring during remote working hours. The team member is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to his or her home worksite.

#### **4. Time Worked**

Remote working team members who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) will be required to accurately record all hours worked using the City's time-keeping system. Hours worked more than those scheduled per day and per workweek require the advance approval of the supervisor. Any approved overtime worked will be calculated and paid appropriately for that pay period. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the immediate termination of the remote work arrangement.



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### **5. Equipment**

On a case-by-case basis the City will determine with information supplied by the team member and the supervisor, the appropriate equipment needs (including hardware, software, and other office equipment) for each remote work arrangement. Hardware and other equipment may not be purchased by the City for the sole purpose of remote working. The team member may supplement City-provided equipment at the team member's expense, such as monitors, specialty keyboards, etc. The City will not furnish additional equipment unless approved by the Department Director and City Manager's Office and a list of standard equipment available for a remote work arrangement is included in the Remote Work Agreement. The Human Resources and Information Technology Departments will serve as resources in this matter.

Team members that have been issued a City cell phone should use that phone for business purposes in compliance with the Mobile Device Use Policy. Work phones may be forwarded to electronic devices using approved technology. In absence of approved technology, team members that do not have a City cell phone but have been approved for a remote work arrangement must provide a contact number that will be available for calls from their supervisor during work hours. All team members working remotely are expected to take phone calls/return emails/reply to a Teams chat message from coworkers or customers without reasonable delay.

Equipment supplied by the organization will be maintained by the organization. Equipment supplied by the team member, including data access/Wi-Fi if deemed appropriate by the organization, will be maintained by the team member. The City accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to team member-owned equipment including hardware, communications devices, and furniture. The City reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Upon termination of employment, all City property will be returned to the City or the value of each will be taken out of the team member's final paycheck, unless other arrangements have been made.

Team members will not be reimbursed for supplies or equipment used to outfit their home office. Printing should be done remotely to an office printer or a team member should come to the office to print and pickup printed documents as necessary.



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### **6. Meetings**

Team members are required to come to the office for work-related meetings, trainings, or other events that cannot be accomplished through an online platform such as Microsoft Teams. In absence of extenuating circumstances, such as video capabilities not working, team members participating in online platform meetings are required to activate their web cameras and may be required to do so by their Department Director. In order to minimize the City's exposure to worker's compensation claims, remote workers may not conduct in-person meetings in their homes.

### **7. Emergency Event**

All City team members are considered essential team members for the continuity of governmental operations in the event of a large-scale emergency, such as a weather event. Remote working agreements may be suspended if the team member has responsibilities in the EOC or is needed at a City location. All team members must be ready to assist in managing the emergency event.

### **8. Emergency Remote Working**

In the event of a large-scale emergency, the City Manager, or an authorized designee, can declare the City in an emergency event status, such as a public health emergency, and activate the Emergency Remote Working portion of this policy. Executive Team members may approve temporary Emergency Remote Working arrangements on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of ongoing continuance. Even if approved for remote working, all team members must be ready to assist in managing the crisis and will be considered essential for the continuity of governmental operations and may be asked to perform jobs in the EOC.

### **9. Compliance with Other City Policies**

Team members working remotely must follow all City policies as if they were physically working at a City facility.



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### **E. Additional Requirements for Remote Working**

To ensure that business operations will not suffer in remote working arrangements, remote team members shall:

- Choose a quiet and distraction-free working space.
- Have an internet connection that is adequate for their job, through a secure and reliable network.
- Present themselves professionally when participating in video conference calls, i.e., professional appearance and attire, and utilize appropriate background screens/images. Cameras are required to be turned on during work calls during work hours.
- Save their work to the appropriate City network location, such as the common drive or a departmental folder, or web-based application, to make it easy for others to access when required.
- Dedicate their full attention to their job duties during working hours.
- Adhere to break and attendance schedules agreed upon with their manager.
- Follow all communication requirements as communicated by the team member's Department Director, such as forwarding their City phone line to their department line or cell phone as applicable.
- Ensure their schedules overlap with those of their team members for as long as is necessary to complete their job duties effectively.
- Be available by phone for conference calls or to communicate with co-workers, your supervisor/manager, citizens and/or customers.
- Team members and managers should determine long-term and short-term goals. They should frequently meet (either online or phone) to discuss progress and results.