

DRAFT RAILS Remote Work Policy – updated 11/28/22

All text below in **bold** (non-headings) is a change from the DRAFT policy last reviewed by the RAILS Policy Committee on 10/31/22. This Draft policy is still being reviewed by legal.

RAILS has established a remote work policy with the recognition that remote work can contribute to organizational objectives and employee well-being. These guidelines offer direction for remote work and management.

Purpose

Remote work offers employees more opportunities for work life balance when it is advantageous to both RAILS and the employee. A remote work policy helps employees balance the demands of their work and personal lives. Remote work can also be an effective workplace strategy when the work can be accomplished remotely. Remote work is always considered in balance with how the work is best accomplished, it is not an employee right.

An employee's compensation, benefits, work status, and work responsibilities will not change due to participation in the remote work program. Remote working employees must comply with all organizational rules, policies, and procedures.

Eligibility

The opportunity to remote work must be approved by the employee's supervisor, who is ultimately responsible for decisions to continue, modify, or discontinue the opportunity, following appropriate notification (a minimum of two weeks notice) to the employee. The decision to allow an employee to work remotely will be made in consultation with Human Resources.

RAILS recognizes the difference between regularly occurring remote work and remote work that may happen on a very intermittent or emergency basis due to factors outside of the control of the organization. Every effort will be made to give notice to employees in case a pivot to remote work is required.

Selection of employees to participate in the RAILS remote work program shall be based on specific, written, work-related criteria including:

- Assessing the scope of the work
- Employee responsibilities and job functions
- Need for, and nature of, interaction with other staff and external clients
- Need for specialized equipment
- Operational needs and/or Availability of other qualified employees on site
- Employee job performance (Performance criteria will be based on formal written infractions issued to an employee that result in disciplinary action)

An employee that is considered for remote working must be able to communicate effectively, work independently and demonstrate excellent productivity and time management. The resources that an employee needs to do his/her job must be easily transportable or available electronically.

Eligibility and suitability of employees to participate in the remote work program will vary among departments and business units, depending on the function and responsibilities of the employee.

Remote working is not an alternative to child or elder care and, when applicable, the employee must make appropriate arrangements for dependent care.

Application Process *(originally appeared towards the end of the policy)*

Remote workers will be required to sign a Remote work Agreement and complete associated documentation.

Remote work arrangements will be on a trial basis for the first three months and may be discontinued or modified at any time at the request of either the remote worker or RAILS. If a remote work arrangement is discontinued by RAILS, every effort will be made to provide notice to the employee. However, there may be instances where no notice is possible. Likewise, if an employee elects to discontinue a remote work arrangement, the employee should provide notice to his/her supervisor. **RAILS may need to provide temporary accommodations for an employee discontinuing remote work until a more permanent accommodation can be provided.**

Employees that are remote working at the time this policy is adopted will be permitted to continue remote working. Existing remote workers will need to sign the Remote work Agreement and complete the associated documentation that is required of all remote workers.

Schedules and Hours

Remote work hours may be different from office work hours; however, remote workers and their supervisors must agree on designated work hours. A regular schedule must be established by the remote worker and approved by his/her supervisor. Employees are expected to work between RAILS core hours of 10am to 3pm. The amount of time the remote worker is expected to work per day or per pay period will not change due to participation in the remote work program. Remote hourly workers should get advance permission in writing from their supervisor before working any hours beyond their designated work hours.

Staff may be required to work in the office upon hire, even if coworkers in similar roles have an approved remote schedule.

Employees must communicate with their supervisor about any travel concurrent with remote work. RAILS employees are expected to maintain a regular residence within the state of Illinois unless an agreement has been reached in writing with their supervisor and Human Resources. **Approvals for out-of-state residency of RAILS employees will be handled on a case-by case basis.** Remote workers must keep their supervisors and Human Resources notified of any changes to their home/remote contact information.

Supervisors retain the right to require a remote worker to return to RAILS's office on a regularly scheduled remote work day should work situations warrant such an action. If a remote worker is frequently required to return to RAILS's office during regularly scheduled remote work days, the supervisor may re-evaluate the compatibility of the remote worker's job responsibilities with respect to remote working, or the specific remote work schedule.

Remote workers are required to account for all time worked in accordance with RAILS's current timekeeping policies. It is the remote worker's responsibility to submit an accurate accounting of hours worked in a timely manner. If a remote worker is sick while working at home or uses other time off, the remote worker must report hours actually worked on his/her timesheet and use relevant paid leave for the remainder of the hours. RAILS policy will be followed for all absences. Remote workers are responsible for keeping and submitting accurate records of their work hours.

Workspace

Remote workers must have an appropriate work area in their home/remote work location that considers ergonomics, equipment, workspace, noise, and interruption factors. The remote worker's off-site workspace should provide an adequate work area, lighting, power, temperature control, and a reliable internet connection (minimum speed of 10MBs download and 1MBs upload per person using the internet). Additional requirements may vary, depending on the nature of the work and the equipment needed to perform the work.

RAILS's liability for job-related accidents will continue to exist during the approved work schedule and in the remote worker's designated work location since the remote worker's remote workspace is an extension of RAILS's workspace. The designated work location must meet [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\) safety rules](#) for the workplace, including smoke detectors; working fire extinguisher; clear, unobstructed exits; removal of hazards that could cause falls; adequate electrical circuitry; and appropriate furniture.

Homeowner's insurance and any changes in rates or coverage are the responsibility of the employee. RAILS provides remote workers with a telecommuting stipend of \$15.00 a month which is intended to reimburse for **teleworking** expenses incurred, particularly those related to internet service. Any increase in the remote worker's home utility and internet costs is the responsibility of the employee.

Federal and state statutory abstracts will be posted at the remote worker's RAILS office location in lieu of posting them in the employee's home/remote office. Remote workers should review these notices while on RAILS's premises.

Remote workers should consult their attorneys, tax advisors, or accountants regarding any legal or tax implications attendant to working at their home or alternative site.

Equipment and Supplies

Remote workers may use RAILS-owned equipment at their off-site workspace with the prior approval of their supervisors provided that the equipment will be used for RAILS work only and its use by a remote worker at his/her off-site workspace will not impede the work of employees working at the RAILS office.

RAILS equipment – RAILS is able to supply **one** laptop, **two** monitors and **one** docking station, **along with any necessary peripheral equipment, to each employee. Additional** keyboards and mice are available on request. The worker may choose how to locate the equipment between home and the office. **In some cases, remote workers may use their own equipment provided that no cost is incurred by RAILS and other RAILS procedures are followed.**

Office supplies will be provided by RAILS and should be obtained during the remote worker's in-office work period. Out-of-pocket expenses for supplies normally available in the office will not be reimbursed. Remote workers are responsible for all supplies, equipment, and/or materials provided by RAILS. All items remain property of RAILS and may not be used for personal or other than RAILS use.

Remote workers must take appropriate action to protect **organization**-provided equipment from damage or theft. RAILS equipment must be returned to RAILS when an employee terminates or discontinues the remote work arrangement. In some cases, remote workers may use their own equipment provided that no cost is incurred by RAILS. Repair and maintenance of employee-owned equipment is the responsibility of the remote worker.

Employee Access and Availability

Remote workers must be available by phone, chat, and/or email during scheduled hours, with the exception of their scheduled lunch period, breaks, or for work functions when they may be unavailable during a period of time. Regular clear communication with supervisors is key **for access and availability as required by RAILS**. Supervisors may establish that employees are required to check for messages within a certain period (e.g., at least once every two hours).

Security and Confidentiality

It is the responsibility of the remote worker to take all precautions necessary to secure confidential information and to prevent unauthorized access. The remote worker is required to observe all office security practices when working outside RAILS's office to ensure the integrity and confidentiality information. Steps to ensure the protection of proprietary information include, but are not limited to, use of locked file cabinets and desks; regular password maintenance; and any other steps appropriate for the job and the environment. The Virtual Private Network (VPN) used by RAILS staff to access files remotely provides security for the transfer of files to and from the shared network.

Income Tax

It will be the remote worker's responsibility to determine any income tax implications of maintaining a home office area. RAILS will not provide tax guidance nor will RAILS assume any additional tax liabilities. Employees are encouraged to consult with a qualified tax professional to discuss income tax implications.

Evaluation

Remote workers will be required to participate in all studies, surveys, training, inquiries, reports, and analyses relating to this program. No employee will be terminated on the basis of working remotely.

Failure to comply with the Terms and Conditions of the Remote Work policy may be cause for disciplinary action and/or termination of the agreement.