

Frequently Asked Questions
UPDATED CHANGES TO THE APPLICATION OF THE USDA
TELEWORK POLICY FOR MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS IN
THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

July 13, 2023

In support of the Department’s continued implementation of the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Memorandum M-23-15 on Organizational Health and Performance dated April 13, 2023, USDA recognizes the vital role managers and supervisors play in advancing USDA’s goals of recruiting and retaining talent, delivering for our stakeholders, and facilitating effective staff engagement and work environment. As such, beginning September 10, 2023, all telework eligible managers and supervisors in the National Capital Region (NCR) will report to and work at least 50 percent of their duty time inperson at their designated Government office worksite. The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are provided to assist impacted personnel and are explicitly limited in application to the aforementioned managers and supervisors.

Q: What is the new instruction for application of the USDA telework policy for the National Capital Region?

A: The new instruction is for telework eligible managers and supervisors located in the NCR and requires these managers and supervisors to report to and work inperson at least 50 percent of their regular working hours each pay period. This is a change from our existing policy, which currently allows telework eligible managers and supervisors in the NCR to telework for up to 8 days per pay period.

Q: Does this new instruction apply to me?

A: This instruction applies to telework eligible managers and supervisors in the NCR. This instruction does not apply if you are a manager or supervisor outside of the NCR or a manager or supervisor with a remote duty station.

Q: How does this instruction define manager?

A: A manager is an individual in a position with duties and responsibilities which require or authorize the individual to formulate, determine, or influence the policies of their operating unit.

Q: How does this instruction define supervisor?

A: A supervisor is an individual who has the authority to hire, direct, assign, promote, reward, transfer, furlough, layoff, recall, suspend, discipline, or remove employees, and otherwise use authority that is not merely routine or clerical in nature but requires the consistent exercise of independent judgment.

Q: What areas are considered located in the National Capital Region?

A: For application of this instruction, the National Capital Region refers to the:

- Whitten Building,
- South Building,
- Yates Building,
- Braddock Place,
- Riverdale
- George Washington Carver Center.

Q: I am a remote worker. Does the new instruction apply to me?

A: No. The new instruction applies to telework eligible managers and supervisors with an agency worksite in the NCR. The policy does not apply to managers and supervisors with an official duty station located outside of the NCR, including remote workers whose SF-50 indicates their home city and state as their official duty station.

Q: When does this new instruction take effect?

A: The new instruction requiring managers and supervisors to report to the agency worksite at least 50 percent of their regular working hours each pay period is effective for Pay Period 19, which begins September 10, 2023.

Q: I am not a manager or supervisor, but I am a teleworker and my agency worksite is located in the National Capital Region. Does the new instruction apply to me?

A: No. At this time, you may still telework up to 8 days each pay period, in accordance with the Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002 on Telework and Remote Work Programs and your approved telework agreement. As a reminder, employees with telework agreements can be required to work in-person as needed, for example if the team is gathering for a mandatory training.

Q: Who do I contact regarding a reasonable accommodation?

A: Please contact your Agency's Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator for information on requesting a reasonable accommodation.

Q: This instruction does not apply to me right now, but will there be changes so it applies to me eventually?

A: In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-23-15 dated April 13, 2023, each Mission Area, Agency, and Staff Office is evaluating its current telework policy to determine whether to make further modifications to the telework policy. Any such changes would only occur after engaging in appropriate bargaining or in accordance with current active bargaining agreements, if applicable.

Q: What are the criteria for measuring the assessment over the remainder of the year?

A: USDA will use data and evidence in organizational health and performance discussions. USDA will leverage both mission support and mission delivery metrics. This includes, but is not

limited to, metrics related to the workforce (hiring and separations), employee engagement (FEVS results), physical space (leased and owned space use), financial management (financial obligation and outlays), and program key performance indicators (including those reported in USDA's Annual Performance Plan on performance.gov).

Q: Will I have to complete a new telework agreement?

A: If you are approved to telework and you are a manager or supervisor with an agency worksite located in the National Capital Region, then your [AD-3018](#), Telework Agreement form will need to be updated to show that you will report to the agency worksite at least 50 percent of your regular working hours each pay period, if it does not currently meet that policy.

Q: Do I have to report to my current designated worksite to meet the instruction's requirements?

A: Yes, unless otherwise instructed or approved by your supervisor. Changes to worksite location designations are to be determined based on the need for meaningful inperson staff engagement and organizational business requirements.

Q: Will the Telework Departmental Regulation be changed?

A: No. The Office of Human Resources does not anticipate making any changes to the current Departmental Regulation (DR) 4080-811-002 with respect to managers and supervisors in the NCR. The Department will assess whether any future changes to the DR are needed moving forward.

Q: How will this instruction be enforced?

A: Agency Heads are required to report and verify adherence to this instruction.

Q: What will the cafeteria options be in the Whitten and South Buildings?

A: The following food service options are currently available at the South and Whitten Buildings:

- USDA's cafeteria is currently open from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The Office of Operations is working to implement a new contract which, come September, will allow for a series of pop-up style food stations.
- Claudia's (South Building sub-basement) is open from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- The Green Olive (South Building sub-basement) is open from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Dunkin' Sandwich Shop (Whitten basement) is open from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Q: Will I be able to park at the office?

A: At the Headquarters Complex, free employee parking is available to qualifying carpools/vanpools, facility maintenance vehicles, Government vehicles, employees with approved accommodations, Senior Executives, and limited visitor parking.

- Employees with an assigned parking space in the South Building have until 9:00 a.m. Monday–Friday to occupy their assigned space. After 9:00 a.m., all parking spaces (not marked as reserved or handicap) in the South Building Courts 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 are available on a first-come, first-served basis for any USDA employee or contractor with valid USDA identification.
- For questions about parking availability and qualifications for free parking at USDA Headquarters, contact the Office of Operations (OO) Customer Service/Parking Administration Services at 202-720-PARK (7275) or via e-mail at: parkingunit@usda.gov. They will redirect your inquiries to your Agency Parking Coordinator if necessary. Their office is located on the first floor Room 1052-S, South Building.
- There is motorcycle parking in Court 5 of the South Building, Lot 8 of the Whitten Building and on C Street (outside Court 2).
- There is bicycle parking at the South Building in Court 2 as well as bike boxes at the Whitten Building in Lots 10a and 10b.
- Short-term metered parking is available on Independence Avenue SW, 12th Street SW, C Street SW, and D Street SW.
- There is also a parking garage (The Portals III, 202-479-6872) located at 1201 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, DC.
- All facilities in the National Capital Region are easily accessible and within walking distance of a metro station, except for the George Washington Carver Center, which is serviced by a shuttle.

Q: WMATA has ongoing issues. Will there be workplace flexibilities to accommodate for that?

A: Please work with your direct supervisor to discuss any temporary flexibilities needed to accommodate a specific issue related to WMATA. Employees are expected to adhere to their approved work schedules and approved telework agreements. The Office of Management and Budget is hosting ongoing conversations on these issues with leadership of WMATA to make them aware of the coming influx of Federal employees.

Q: COVID-19 is not completely gone. How will you ensure our health and safety?

A: USDA will continue operating under the [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan \(usda.gov\)](#) as required by the [Safer Federal Workforce Taskforce](#).

Q: What health and support services will the Department be providing?

A: For employees located in the National Capital Region, there is the Dr. Gregory Parham Medical Unit in the South Building (Room 1411, first floor, Wing 4). The Medical Unit provides primary care services to include vaccines and flu shots. You may reach them at (202) 720-9522

or use the convenient [USDA Medical Unit - Request Appointment - Kareo](#) site to request an appointment.

Q: How does this policy apply to contractors?

A: Contractors will continue to follow the requirements in their contract.

Q: Will the physical spaces be set up to accommodate core days and hybrid meetings?

A: Yes. There are several initiatives underway already that will position us to accommodate more people in the office. For example, the OneNeighborhood Initiative, completed in 2022, provided for the collocation and consolidation of agencies throughout the NCR with the purpose of enhancing communication and collaboration. The initiative required a major investment in infrastructure consisting of upgrading network switches throughout the South and Whitten Buildings allowing plug-and-play with the freedom to move anywhere without losing Wi-Fi connectivity. In addition, with the modernization of the Headquarters facilities, the Department is moving to a new workplace model using 6x6 cubicles and 10x10 private offices. This workplace model was used exclusively in the renovation of the George Washington Carver Center, doubling capacity from 1,000 employees pre-modernization to 2,000 employees post-modernization. The upcoming renovation of Wing 7 will double the capacity from 300 workstations to 600 workstations. We are also exploring the feasibility of utilizing available space at alternative sites, like the George Washington Carver Center or the Riverdale Building, to ease commuting burdens for those living closer to those sites.

Q: Will USDA information technology services and staff be prepared to manage more people in the buildings?

A: Yes, the Digital Infrastructure Services Center (DISC) is staffed 24/7 to address many types of IT service needs. They can be reached at disc.servicedesk@usda.gov, by phone at 888-873-6482 or through the [portal](#).

Q: Is there enough facilities and security staff to handle more people being in the buildings in the NCR?

A: These teams have been fully staffed throughout the pandemic and stand ready to serve you.

Q: Who should I contact if I need clarifying information?

A: You can submit questions to futureofwork@usda.gov or you can speak with your Mission Area Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO).