
CommuteSmart Birmingham

Telework Planning Guide



About CommuteSmart Birmingham

CommuteSmart, an initiative of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, uses vehicle miles reduced as a measure of program effectiveness. Vehicle miles reduced (VMR) is the difference in commuting miles a person driving alone would eliminate by taking alternative commutes such as walking, bicycling, taking the bus, carpooling, vanpooling, or working from home (also referred to as teleworking). CommuteSmart is focused on reducing single occupancy vehicles and improving air quality.



What We Can Offer You

- Outreach events
- Communication tools
- Customized marketing materials
- Quarterly newsletters
- Commuter participation reports
- Carpool Parking signs
- Vanpool Parking signs
- Assistance in setting up carpools and vanpools with our free ridematching database
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plans
- Informative sessions to educate employees on our program
- Provide applications and information for new employee packets
- An Emergency Ride Home benefit for participants
- Assistance creating & implementing telework policy and guidance on the commuter benefits
- Incentives for those who log at least 20 clean commutes in a 90-day time span
- Employee Transportation Surveys

Benefits of Teleworking

- Increased productivity by saving saving commute to work time and avoidance of office distractions
- Flexible work options
- Better work/life balance
- Reduced stress from commuting
- Increased management skills
- Improved morale and work life balance
- Lowered employee turnover rate
- Improved overall health
- Decreased parking and real estate cost
- Improved air quality
- Reduced traffic congestion



How to Implement A Successful Telework Policy

Teleworking is not a requirement by management, but rather a management option. CommuteSmart Birmingham has found some of the below policies to be instrumental in creating a successful telework environment:

- Be clear about "in office" hours
- Encourage strong channels of communication
- Provide infrastructure for those who telework
- Provide telework orientation/training for employees
- Establish eligibility requirements
- Maintain guidance and directives for policies from top level (HR) to management to employees
- Telework agreements signed by management/employees
- Evaluations and follow ups regarding job performance post trial period (Employee surveys are valuable as well)

Template of Telework Checklist

EMPLOYEE CHECKLIST

- Sign-in and be available online during core business hours, except for individual cases approved by your supervisor in advance.
- Email your supervisor when signing on and off for the day.
- Notify your supervisor if you're logging off to work on projects offline.
- Commute to the office or other locations for meetings, presentations, etc. when required although it may be a telework day.

SUPERVISOR CHECKLIST

- Ensure that the employee has the appropriate supplies to telework and they are in proper condition.
- Discuss the rules for use of company equipment for telework with the employee.
- Maintain a list of the supplies and equipment provided to the employee.
- Ensure a contingency plan is in place if/when technical issues arise while the employee is teleworking.
- Discuss expectations around how often the employee and you will check in with each other and which tools you will use to stay in contact.
- Inform the employee of performance expectations for the role both verbally and in writing.

1. How do I maintain a team environment if employees are working at different locations?

- Set core office days – Specific days of week for employees to be at the office or onsite with clients for face to face meetings or events.
- “Increase the use of virtual meeting apps when appropriate, such as Microsoft Teams, Skype Business, Zoom, GoTo Meetings and others.”
- Create a central schedule and contact information so that everyone knows how to reach everyone.
- Request weekly conference call with your team.

2. How will I know if my staff is doing their job if they're not in the office?

- Most performance can't be measured by the time spent at an employee's desk. During the pilot phase of the telework policy, you could schedule check-ins, review their work in progress, or track their productivity.
- “Request team member weekly progress reports to check status on tasks/projects assigned.”

3. If I allow one employee to telework, all will feel entitled to do the same?

- Many people enjoy the social aspects of the work environment and recognize on their own that they might not be as disciplined when working at home alone rather than a more structured environment.

4. Can anyone telework?

- Some job requirements do not allow for teleworking.
- Telework policies should establish clear eligibility requirements.

Conclusion

Flexible work arrangements, including teleworking, are on the rise in the United States. CommuteSmart has seen the positive impact that clean commuting has for employees and employers. Increased productivity, improved recruiting/retention, reduced absenteeism/tardiness, decreased carbon footprint, health benefits and overall cost savings are just a few of the benefits noted by our partner companies.