

State of Vermont Employee Guide for Successful, Productive, and Engaged Telework

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Background and Sources

This Guide has been developed to support staff, supervisors, and managers throughout the enterprise in being effective, connected, and inclusive in a telework environment.

The subject areas and content included in the document are *living*. As we learn more from your experiences, researching best practices and as technology changes, we will adapt this guide to reflect the best practices for telework working.

This Guide is intended to be a foundation for supporting telework; however, you may find other resources or strategies that work best for you, or your teams.

The content in this document is drawn from organizational knowledge, national research, and best practices from other states, and these sources provided by the company Trello:

- https://info.trello.com/hubfs/How_To_Embrace_Remote_Work_Trello_Ultimate_Guide.pdf
- <https://blog.trello.com/happy-productive-remote-worker>

Disclaimer

This document is an informal supporting document. It is intended as general support for employees who have chosen to telework. It is not intended to replace COOP (Continuity of Operations) directives, State policy or guidance from DHR, and/or collective bargaining agreements, as applicable. Individual situations will vary, and it is important that employees work with their supervisors and management for further support.

Intended audience

The intended audience of this document is any classified, exempt, and temporary employee within the Executive Branch of the State of Vermont who is participating to any degree in telework.

What is Telework?

Telework is a working arrangement that gives the employee an approved alternative place where they can conduct their work in accordance with their work schedule. Telework allows the employee to work from a designated office and/or another designated place, the location and schedule of which is pre-decided/pre-approved by the appointing authority.

State of Vermont Telework Policy

Click [here](#) to access the State of Vermont telework policy. Some employees may get approval to telework most days of the week; others may get approval to work some days a week at home. Supervisors can ask employees to travel to the office or other locations on any day, including pre-approved telework days.

Benefits of Telework

Not all job duties are appropriate for telework, and not all positions will be able to telework as easily as others. For those positions that are able, you may find benefits to incorporating telework into your schedule, including:

- **Increased productivity.** You may find that teleworking allows you to create your own workplace conditions in a way that helps you focus and easily meet your own needs throughout the day.

- **Decreased travel time.** You may appreciate being able to reduce your commute time and associated mileage and cost.
- **Increased availability for meetings.** Joining meetings virtually using Microsoft Teams, or similar applications, may increase meeting productivity, and shorten meetings. It may be easier for others to join your meetings who would have had to travel otherwise.

Some of the benefits of telework may bring to the organization can include:

- **Increased flexibility of work style can improve service.** When we work remotely, we may improve our ability to collaborate with others, thereby creating opportunities to improve production, communication, and cross-sectional partnerships.
- **Improved talent pool.** We improve our ability to recruit in a competitive workplace if we can offer telework as a potential option. Opportunities for internal promotions grow, without barriers to a potentially long commute.
- **Breaking down barriers.** Paradoxically, teleworking may allow us to break down physical/geographic silos, leading to innovation and efficiency.

Fundamental best practices of telework

Productivity

Use structure to maximize productivity

Productivity can be high whether working onsite or remotely, though different types of work may be more or less suited to telework.

In telework, it's especially important for managers to set goals and deadlines, develop a framework for regular status updates, and hold weekly (or more frequent) check-ins.

Set boundaries and adhere to defined work schedules

Schedule and availability, or policy and procedure, do not change when a person's workspace location changes. It is also a key best practice for teleworkers to adhere to a clear work schedule and boundaries (see below in "Tips for teleworkers") as defined with their manager and included in their approved documentation.

Employees engaged in telework are expected to follow their approved schedule, as they would at their assigned work location, unless the employee has an approved alternate work schedule. If you are going to be unavailable for a short period of time, you may be required to use your accrued leave.

Beyond and apart from telework, you may be looking for ways to increase flexibility in your work schedule to align with how you can be most productive and engaged. If so, you can talk with your supervisor about developing an [alternate work schedule](#) and/or exploring the DHR [Employee Workweek/Location/Shift](#) policy.

Connectivity

Clearly communicate availability

Teleworkers, like on-site workers, may need to attend meetings or set aside focus time in order to complete work. If you would like others to best understand your availability, it may be helpful to use status indicators on your calendar or in Microsoft Teams to indicate periods when you might not be as responsive.

Be creative to maintain organizational culture

A lot of non-verbal cues and quick conversations happen in face-to-face interaction. Teleworkers can build camaraderie through quick chats (voice or text), sharing their pets or workspaces by video, and making some time for informal conversation. Also, see tips below.

Tips for Teleworkers: staying engaged and productive

Keep your usual schedule and indicate your status.

This keeps your boundaries clear and ensures your colleagues know when they can reach you.

- Adhere to a clear work schedule as indicated in your Outlook calendar, just as you would for on-site work. This includes day's beginning and end, and lunch break.
- When you are not available for work, indicate that in your calendar and, when appropriate, make sure you have the approval of your supervisor.
- Stay logged in to Teams whenever possible and keep your status indicators accurate. This keeps you accessible to your colleagues for a quick chat.

Actively manage your focus and time.

- Plan and set "free" blocks of times when you will address your high-priority tasks. (Outlook has a free focus time planning feature that you can explore).
- Set realistic goals each day about what you will achieve and communicate with your supervisor or teams on progress.

Set clear boundaries in time and space around your work.

- To the extent that you are able, designate a location in your home as your "office" to help build the sense of boundary between "work" and "home-life" and support you to work effectively.
- To the extent that you are able, physically turn off work devices and exit your workspace when your workday is complete.

As able, configure your environment for optimal physical and mental health.

- Consider what factors contribute to a positive workday in your experience – consider lighting, seating, plants, photos, organization of materials...

Manage your pace.

Building in frequent breaks which require you to leave your workstation and move, are recommended. For instance, taking a 5 or 10 minute break every hour to walk or drink a glass of water. Or alternate tasks (mentally challenging vs. rote tasks, for example).

Speak with your supervisor to ensure you have needed tools.

If you think you may not be utilizing tools and supports available to maximize your telework experience, speak with your supervisor. They can help you find training, resources, or technical assistance to improve your ability to be effective in a telework environment.

Ensure you are following security policy and procedure when working with protected or regulated data.

If you have questions about what is protected or regulated or how you can ensure proper handling of this data, ask your supervisor.

Where possible, manage your bandwidth.

During the workday, be mindful that any use of the Internet can impact internet speed in your home, as well as other users in your location on your network. During times of emergency, it can be important to try to prioritize the use of a home-based WIFI/network connections to support telework.

Tips for managers and teams: creating a healthy telework culture

Structure work & performance check-ins

To facilitate successful telework, managers should set goals and deadlines, develop a framework for regular status updates, and hold weekly check-ins.

Consider how to set goals and manage performance:

- Create clear, equitable expectations for individual employees.
- Use [SMART](#) principles in developing goals.
- Solicit feedback, and act upon it.

Consider how to collect feedback. Managers should be open to feedback from their employees. One way to solicit feedback is by simply asking, “Am I providing the support that you need? Is there anything that I can do differently?” and following through on reasonable requests.

Build shared practices

Building culture for telework teams requires **intention**: to share common interests, have meaningful meetings, and understand one another.

This can be called developing “**shared practices.**” Everyone is playing by the same rules, understands the team’s practices, and feels that they are operating and contributing in an equitable environment.

- In communication, this includes working to **digitally share the same signals** you would have in person, to build trust and to avoid confusion – like deciding to use the raised hand function in Microsoft Teams meetings or raising your actual hand on the video screen if you have something you want to share with the group.
- This work also includes building shared **ground rules and expectations**. When you think of a great organizational culture, you might not think of rules. But in this case, rules are social norms that provide participants with an expected experience when they enter the “office.” You can build ground rules and expectations together as a team to make sure that everyone’s voice is included in the process and that people can build norms that are supportive and equitable. This helps build trust and connection. See some basic ground rules below:

Basic ground rules

- **Always assume positive intent and prioritize empathy.** Since tone and nuance can be lost in text, always assume a colleague is coming from a positive place.
- **Treat others with transparency.** Keep important information accessible to everyone. Log and share decisions made in private conversation; record meetings; and take notes and share them in spaces accessible by all team members.
- **Asynchronous (occurring at different times) is a-ok:** embrace communication across distributed work schedules. This requires planning ahead to make important decisions.
- **Expect structure:** Establish a process, structure, and agenda around meetings and updates so everyone can follow along, no matter their location. Assign a meeting lead and scribe to ensure key decisions are captured in writing.
- **Embrace differences:** Encourage people to share their perspectives and opinions. Listen to each other and allow for opposing views or experiences to be shared. This is what fuels creativity and innovation.

Build personal connection and an inclusive community

- Use quick audio or text chats in the same way on-site workers have “water cooler conversation.” Just check in.
- In meetings, build in a little time for non-work connection about activities, icebreakers, and non-work things.
- Team users can use a “Team Fun” channel to share work appropriate pictures, links, and other media to connect on a personal level.

- Remember we are all humans, even if we are behind a screen, and treat one another accordingly.
- Also indicate who to contact if further accommodations are required.

You should: Recognize employee and team achievements often.

- Invest in employees' professional interests and development.
- Ask for and listen to employee opinions and address what them.

Hold Regular Meetings

- Communicate clearly, honestly, and predictably.
- Provide information prior to any meeting regarding discussion and decision topics, to allow staff to prepare and provide multiple input methods. This will require advance preparation and will require sending out agendas, questions, or discussion points prior to meetings, as well as ensuring all voices are heard in a format that functions for them. Ex: A slower processor, or introvert may appreciate an alternate way to submit suggestions or might have suggestions after the meeting has ended.
- Some staff may not feel comfortable speaking up in meetings, so finding methods to encourage their input is important. This might take the form of a 1:1 conversation, email dialog, phone, or video call.
- Provide notes and clear action items during and after a meeting. Make the action items as SMART goals when possible.
- Make the meeting summary and action items available, and easy to access.
- Hold regular meetings to build trust, and relationships. 1:1 meetings and team meetings are both important parts of online community.

1:1 Meetings

- In advance of meetings (even 1:1s) send agenda with any questions you will be asking to allow individuals to prepare.
- Allow employees to set/contribute to agendas for 1:1 and other meetings.

Communicate more than you think is necessary

Follow the [Rule of Seven](#), which states that people need to hear a message seven times before they'll internalize it. If you feel like you are over-communicating information, you're probably communicating just the right amount.

Adapt communication style to the medium

Teams should consider and discuss when to use different types of communication: chat, email, or picking up the phone/having a voice discussion. For example, if a conversation is not time sensitive, it can be sent in an email or posted in a Team rather than pinging someone in chat.

Supervisors and managers should also build and maintain awareness around their team members' preferences for communication. This can be part of the process of developing team ground rules discussed above.

General Communication Notes

- For teams with varying work schedules, consolidate communication and updates, consider a specific time of day/system for communications. This means the location of the information as well as when it will be available is clear to people in varying locations, and schedules.
- Ensure all staff understand and feel comfortable using the chosen communication platform. (Training may be required)
- Know your employee's communication styles, learning styles, and strengths. (Consider CAPS's Assessment, or other online assessments) Use of Gallup's Strengths Based Performance Management to Promote Workplace Diversity and Inclusion, see: [GALLUPS Strength Assessment- Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- Managers should model strengths-based, inclusive language.
- It is the managers responsibility to ensure that they are actively soliciting feedback for any barriers.
- Use State/Department common language. Define terms and regularly direct people to those definitions.
- All individuals should be provided with a shortcuts list for your desired communications platform, as well as information on the features and usage of the tool.

Communication style and format notes

In a telework environment, communication style and format matters!

- All communications must meet the minimum 508 Accessibility Compliance standards.
 - [ADA Grievance Policy](#)
 - [DHR Reasonable Accommodation Request Form](#)
- When communicating with coworkers and external sources, indicate that translations and accommodations are available, and how to request them.
- Best Practice: Collaborate with a "Content Buddy". Use an assigned content reviewer or find a peer who will review your content before posting. Have them look for jargon, acronyms, any common language that should be identified, accessibility issues, grammar, non-inclusive language etc.

Ground rules for audio or video

Audio or video meeting etiquette is important:

- Mute when you're not speaking.
- To the extent you are able, choose a workspace that is free from background noise.
- If using video, keep it on to stay engaged.

- Allow others time to speak. Not all users are comfortable speaking up, so creating time for those individuals is important. Also, do not be afraid of “dead air”. Give others time to digest and think over conversation points. To make sure everyone has a chance to speak, you can consider using the “raise hand” function in Microsoft Teams, or raising actual hands if people are using video, or facilitating sharing around the “room,” or employing breakout groups.
- Muting is important, but people may have issues finding that button to unmute; make sure they have time.
- Be aware of your background visual when you are on video. Use tools on Teams to change or blur backgrounds if needed.
- Use professional language at all times.

Video notes

Some private sector companies use video heavily to keep their teams and organization connected. At the State of Vermont, video is used differently among teams, but your team could consider setting ground rules for video-based meetings.

Ground rules for chat or email

- Remember that indirect communication tools can mask intention or purpose, and that there is another human being at the other end of the conversation.
- Constructive feedback should be reserved for audio or video discussions, not text or written chat, to make sure your intentions are clearly communicated. Also remember that written chat and email are public record.
- Remember that two people can interpret a chat or email discussion with different tone or intention. That can lead to confusion or misunderstandings. When possible, create opportunities for a video or phone call to navigate through these situations.
- Check in with audio or video regularly to avoid issues that arise from relying too much on text communications.
- Let others know what they can’t see for themselves: if you’re rushing off somewhere or swamped on a project, your response might be brief. Let your colleagues know why.

Ground rules for meetings

- The right tools are important: headphones if needed, internet connection, and quiet space (as much as possible).
- It’s more important than ever to communicate meeting schedules, structure, and expectations to attendees.
 - Every meeting should have an agenda, notes, and tracked items for later discussion.
 - Consider leveraging a collaborative document or tool (OneNote, Word, Planner) where everyone can contribute to the agenda.
 - Organizers should provide openings for participants to speak and prevent interruptions.

- Organizers should provide everyone the opportunity to find the mute button – it can take a few moments.
- Share all context of the meeting in a written format.
- Whenever possible allow 5 to 10 minutes, prior to the end of the meeting, to allow for transition time where closing statements or questions can be communicated.

Training and professional development

Employees and managers can access a wide variety of training materials in the Learning Management System (LMS) to increase their knowledge, skills, and capabilities for performing in an telework environment and for professional and leadership development.

To access trainings, log in to the Learning Management System using the link below:

[LINC](#)

[LMS](#) (for AOT users only)

Current online training resources: *(new trainings are added to the Learning Management System on a regular basis – use keywords –leadership, engagement, remote work, remote work – for additional topics):*

Working Remotely

- [Managing Remotely](#)
- [Enhancing Productivity with Remote Workers](#)
- [Performance Development for Remote Employees](#)
- [Managing Remote Customer Service Teams](#) (Basic information about setting norms and expectations for meetings which are applicable to any virtual team – not just customer service)
- [Remote Leadership: The Unique Aspects of the Virtual Work Environment](#)
- [Stay Productive While Working Remotely](#)
- [Working Remotely: Cybersecurity at Home](#)
- [Working Remotely](#)

Leadership

- [Remote Leadership: Classic Leadership with a Virtual Twist](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Managing Remote Teams](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Giving Remote Feedback](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Applying Coaching Remotely](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Building Trust in the Virtual Environment](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Getting Ready for Your Virtual Presentation](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Communication Techniques for Web-Based Presentations](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Planning a Virtual Meeting](#)
- [Remote Leadership: The Pitfalls of Web-Based Meetings](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Collaborative Goal Setting at a Distance](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Helping Other Achieve Goals](#)

- [Remote Leadership: Keys to Remote Accountability](#)
- [Leadershift - Why Every Leader Needs to Leadershift](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 1: Introduction](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 2: Awareness](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 3: Human Side of Engagement](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 4: Expression](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 5: Connections](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 6: Coaching Conversations](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 7: Trust](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 8: Support Your Team](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 9: The Moment](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 10: The Thinking Process](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 11: The Pause](#)
 - [Remote Leadershift 12: Main Reasons for Resisting Innovation](#)
- [Remote Leadership: Maximizing Virtual Tools](#)

Hiring

- [Hiring Remotely](#)
- [Hiring Remotely: Recruiting Stellar Applicants](#)
- [Hiring Remotely: Interviewing Candidates](#)
- [Hiring Remotely: Virtually Onboarding New Hires](#)

Playlists

- [Coaching](#)
- [Conflict](#)
- [Conflict Resolution](#)
- [Conflict Management, Supervisor Playlist](#)
- [Creating a Positive Workplace](#)
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Difficult Conversations](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Diversity – Unconscious Bias and Privilege](#)
- [Employee Engagement](#)
- [Facilitation](#)
- [Feedback](#)
- [Generational Diversity](#)
- [Mindfulness](#)
- [Brief Guided Meditations for Mindfulness](#)
- [Mindful Movement for Stressful Times](#)
- [Resilience](#)
- [Time Management](#)
- [Writing](#)

Leverage tools for Remote work

Below is a list of resources to help ensure everyone has, and is on the same page about, tools they need to do their job. Visit the [Agency of Digital Services intranet site](#) to learn more about these tools and get started.

Essential Technology Resources

<p>Microsoft Teams</p>	<p>Microsoft Teams is an online communication and team collaboration tool that's part of the Microsoft Office 365 Suite. While it's mostly used for video conferencing by remote teams, that's not the only thing it can do. Teams can help you be used for virtually creating, sharing and coauthoring documents, record audio and video meetings (<i>if recording meetings be aware of confidentially restrictions</i>).</p> <p>Agency of Digital Services has a link to the Teams left-hand navigation directly from their Teams page with FAQs and “How To” tips</p> <p>Etiquette In Teams eBook</p>
<p>SharePoint</p>	<p>Organizations use Microsoft SharePoint to create websites. You can use it as a secure place to store, organize, share, and access information from any device.</p> <p>State of Vermont uses this as our Intranet site and is only accessible for those within state government.</p> <p>Getting started with SharePoint</p>
<p>OneDrive For Business</p>	<p>Microsoft OneDrive is a file hosting service and synchronization service operated by Microsoft as part of its web version of Office. First launched in August 2007, OneDrive allows users to store files and personal data in the cloud, share files, and sync files across Android, Windows Phone, and iOS mobile devices, Windows and macOS computers. Users can upload Microsoft Office documents to OneDrive.</p> <p>Getting started with OneDrive</p> <p>*Note OneDrive is not available for all Agencies or Departments. Please check with your ADS representative for additional information.</p>
<p>eSignature</p>	<p>State of Vermont currently uses OneSpan digital signatures.</p> <p>OneSpan Sign is an electronic signature solution behind some of the world's most trusted brands. Regulated industries and top analyst firms recognize OneSpan Sign's solution to balance the highest levels of security and compliance with ease-of-use while automating any process.</p>

	<p>Quick Start Guide</p>
Virtual Private Networks (VPN)	<p>A virtual private network, better known as a VPN, protects your identity and browsing activity from hackers, businesses, government agencies, and other snoops. When connecting to the internet, your data and IP address are hidden by a type of virtual tunnel. This keeps others from spying on your online activity.</p> <p>Instructions for using Open VPN</p>
Citrix	<p>Citrix is software that lets you run applications on a remote computer but interact with those applications on your local computer. It also lets you access a remote computer as if you were sitting at it, but inside a window.</p>
Service Desk Manager	<p>The Ivanti ticketing system Service Catalog (request offerings) module replaced the LANDesk User Account Request system for setting up accounts for newly hired employees, on the VSMS Domain and Foreign Domains (like ANR, AOT, LABOR, etc.), changes to existing employee information, or removing terminated employees accounts. AHS will still use LANDesk for User Account Requests.</p> <p>Authorized Requestors have the ability to submit requests to add, edit, and remove the access/permissions of employees to various state systems and software. Authorized Requestors are tasked to make sure that a request is appropriately approved before they submit a User Account Request (New Hire Request Offering) ticket. Below is helpful training materials to guide an Authorized Requestor in the uses and process of submitting a User Account Request (New Hire Request Offering).</p> <p>Ivanti Ticketing System (for Analyst supervisory and management positions)</p>
Planner	<p>Microsoft Planner is a light weight, mobile and web-based application to help teams create plans, assign tasks, chat about tasks, and see charts of your team's progress. Can be accessed separately or within MS Teams application.</p> <p>Microsoft Planner Video Training</p>
OneNote	<p>Microsoft OneNote is a note-taking program for free-form information gathering and multi-user collaboration. It gathers users' notes, drawings, screen clippings, and audio commentaries. Notes can be shared with</p>

	<p>other OneNote users over the Internet or a network. Can be accessed separately or within MS Teams application.</p> <p>Quick Started with OneNote</p>
Forms	<p>Microsoft Forms is an online survey creator, part of Office 365. Forms allows users to create surveys and quizzes with automatic marking. The data can be exported to Microsoft Excel.</p> <p>Quick Start</p>
Online Training Resources to use applications	<p>MS Teams</p> <p>Teams Open Office Hours live sessions every Thursdays from 3-4</p> <p>OneSpan (eSign) Open Office Hours live sessions the first Tuesday from 2:30-3:30</p> <p>State of Vermont Learning Management System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LINC • LMS (AOT users) <p>KnowledgeWave online learning resources (if you have not previously signed up please contact them at 1 (800) 831-8449 support@knowledgewave.com)</p> <p>Productivity Lab Microsoft Stream Channel</p> <p>Lean Learning Series Microsoft Stream Channel</p>
Computer Customer Support Information	<p>Employees working for any of the departments or agencies listed in this link should contact the help desk in their organization for assistance. In those cases where it is necessary, the individual department/agency help desk will coordinate activities with the ADS (Agency of Digital Services) Service Desk.</p> <p>Contact Information</p> <p>For more information regarding technology services, such as telephone, network, and security service, etc. please click here.</p>

Secure access

Most teleworkers can use OpenVPN to access resources behind the firewall. In some cases, the worker can use OpenVPN and then route to additional resources using internal Citrix.

There is a very limited number of Citrix RSA tokens to use when OpenVPN will not suffice.

Practice good security and privacy policies whether you are at home, office or other location. For example, lock your laptop if you walk away, ensure no one is watching over your shoulder, etc.

Password

Consider how your workstation credentials will be updated as periodically required by the system. Credentials must be reset over OpenVPN or when on the State network (wired or wireless). Options include:

- Proactively reset password when on site
- Proactively reset password over OpenVPN (note: does not work over Citrix)
- The State of Vermont wireless network can be accessed outside of State buildings even if you cannot enter the building.

Internet connection

Most telework requires an internet connection. In Vermont, getting sufficient bandwidth can be a challenge. If a staff person does not have access to broadband, their management, business office, and IT support may be able to explore other options, for example connectivity via mobile phone hotspot.

Workstation

State-provided laptops are the preferred tool. It is not currently an option to relocate desktops, per the ADS Secretary's Office.

Personal devices are not typically permitted. If the situation seems to require a personal device, discuss with your supervisor.

For work serving the Agency of Human Services, workstations should be encrypted whenever possible.

Email

- Can be used through the desktop Outlook client or the office.com web portal
- Best for "broadcast" announcements or discussions that need to be formalized or documented
- Avoid flooding coworkers with quick or complicated questions that should be routed to discussion, chat, or a meeting
- If a conversation moves beyond three back and forth comments, it's time to have a call or meet

Chat

Teams chat is a useful tool:

- Can be engaging and fun to use
- Offer “social” features like emojis and GIFs to foster positive and natural communication
- Group chats or discussion threads spread/democratize information (any team member can read and catch up). *Note: chats and threads are used for transitory discussions. If information needs to be held for a longer term, it should be transferred to another format!*
- Discussion threads or group chats are asynchronous (not everyone has to be present at the same time), helping to avoid unnecessary interruptions
- Live IM (one-on-one chat) is usually synchronous but can also be read/responded to later

Audio Calls

Only some staff members have mobile phones that can be used for telework.

However, all staff members can conduct audio calls to coworkers via Teams. Please note that an additional conference bridge license is needed to add the ability for attendees to dial into Teams meetings by phone.

VOIP phones can not be moved off the State network and will not work if transported home.

Remote Meetings

Teams continues to add video call features, including ones like special modes, and display of more attendees in the gallery.

- Adds needed nuance and clarity when conversations are heated or confused.
- Offers hybrid of video and audio depending on user needs.
- Display “gallery view” of all participants during conversation; focus may be automatically shifted to whoever’s currently speaking.
- Adjacent chat window provides an ongoing “peanut gallery” of comments and reactions.
- Backgrounds avoid background distractions or privacy breaches.
- Offers closed captioning of conversations, if selected.

Documents

All of the following tools are provided through Office 365 and allow coauthoring and collaboration. Office 365 can be accessed from state devices through the Microsoft portal at www.office.com. You might need to sign in with your state credentials or authenticate yourself, but you do not need OpenVPN to access any of these tools.

- Informal notes or running meeting notes can be taken in OneNote. This collaborative documentation tool allows coauthoring and stores notes by categories. Many SharePoint sites have an associated OneNote, and so do Teams.

- Those who have OneDrive may store draft or personal documents there and can choose to share them. Each OneDrive is dedicated to an individual user, so it shouldn't be used for non-[transitory](#) documents.
 - Those who don't have OneDrive can't share documents in Teams meeting chats.
- SharePoint can be used for collaboration on drafts or to present and share finalized, published documents. Permissions can be set to meet a wide range of needs.
- If allowed by your agency, Teams can be used to collaborate upon documents. The base functionalities are SharePoint-based so do not differ, but the access/interface is a little different.
- SharePoint, OneDrive, Teams, and O365 Groups may not be used to communicate federally regulated information (Personally Identifiable Information, Protected Health Information, Federal Tax Information, etc.).
- Documents in network shared folders can be accessed using secure access tools.
- Documents should be created with an eye toward accessibility including but not limited to appropriate fonts and formatting, alt text for embedded images, and PDFs converted from images to text.

Troubleshooting

If you experience problems with your work-provided tools or applications, coordinate with your supervisor as needed, and log an Ivanti (help desk) ticket.

If your problem prevents you from accessing the Ivanti system, you can call the State of Vermont IT Help Desk at Phone: 802-828-6620 or toll free 1-855-828-6620 - Option 1 during standard State work hours.

Logistical checklist: preparing for telework

Staff

- Proactively reset your password.
- Bring your laptop, charger/dock, and any other needed accessories home. If your location is variable or evolving, make sure they come home with you every night. There may be a form to fill out for some or all equipment.
- Bring your work phone and charger home, and ensure the phone is charged.
- Identify your office location: as quiet and comfortable as possible.
- Test printing to a State printer at home. (If issues arise, take a screenshot for support use.)
- From home, test your commonly used applications that do not need secure access: Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), Outlook, Teams, Edge or other browser. Open the application and use it a little bit to ensure it behaves as expected.
- Test the use of your OpenVPN, Citrix, or other secure access tool.

- Ensure your upcoming meetings (held by you and held by others) all offer a Teams option.
- Update your email signatures if needed.
- Ensure your Outlook calendar information (working hours, lunch breaks, out of office time) is up to date.
- Verify your Outlook address book contact information is correct. If not, log an Ivanti ticket to update it.
- Work with your supervisor to create a regular check-in meeting.
- Work with your supervisor to plan how you will define and check in on daily and weekly work goals and schedules.
- Practice good security and privacy policies whether you are at home, office or other location. For example, lock your laptop if you walk away, ensure no one is watching over your shoulder, etc.

Managers

- Follow related HR policy and procedure.
- Provide clear, written expectations and/or HR policy and procedure to teleworkers.
- Establish communication plan for team members and key contacts, including cadence for meetings and information sharing. It may be enough to add remote options to existing meetings, or you may need to add new ones to replace formerly in-person interactions.
- Review tools and resources with staff, including important internal and external websites.
- Create regular one-on-one check-ins with staff.
- Create regular team check-ins.
- Work with each staff member to plan how you will define and check in on daily and weekly work goals and schedules.
- Review each staff member's secure access needs and options and ensure they are using the correct practices to meet their needs as well as security and privacy requirements.

Managers – enacting telework during emergency operations

- Identify roles whose business functions can be performed offsite.
- COOP plans should reflect emergent situations where staff will be required to work offsite.
- For staff in those roles, work with HR and other resources to answer any questions about limitations on location or distance from their designated work location.
- Determine whether there is any possibility to access your usual on-site work area during emergency operations. If not, consider whether any additional personal items or work equipment will need to be transferred offsite, if possible.

- ❑ Ensure you have up-to-date contact information for your team and any other key colleagues.
- ❑ If any staff will continue to be onsite during emergency operations, include their onsite contact information into your list.
- ❑ If any staff will continue to be onsite during emergency operations, ensure their schedule is clear to the team and key contacts.
- ❑ Request each staff member to prepare a contingency plan in case of loss of power, water, internet connection, or other remote issue.
- ❑ Identify essential offsite staff and their backups, should there be complications with telework.
- ❑ If your team includes vendors, notify them of the telework operations and any changes in team contact information or availability.
- ❑ If needed, contact vendors that make deliveries.