

HOME-BASED WORK

Background

The Good Spirit School Division recognizes that the use of flexible working arrangements can assist staff in balancing their family and other responsibilities with their work commitments.

Where an individual volunteers for home-based working and this be agreed, the new way of working will depend on the individual's role, personal preferences and circumstances. This arrangement may enable an employee working at home to work more flexible hours. However, for this to be agreed the Director of Education will need to be satisfied that the quality of service is maintained, and that no difficulties result for colleagues.

The main objectives of introducing home-based working are:

- To make employees' working lives less stressful by reducing travel time and being more flexible about the place of work.
- To make Good Spirit School Division a more attractive employer in terms of recruitment and retaining staff.
- To benefit the environment by reducing the use of resources.
- To increase employee morale and to have a more satisfied workforce.

Procedures

1. Application

- 1.1 This procedure applies to general staff members of the Good Spirit School Division whose work is deemed suitable for home-based work.
- 1.2 Good Spirit School Division will consider applications for home-based work and accommodate the needs of staff members where it is possible to do so, and provided that there is no unreasonable cost to Good Spirit School Division or detriment to the staff member's work performance or that of the teams as a result of the home-based work arrangement.
- 1.3 Each application will be assessed on its merits; with reference to the staff member's needs, the requirements of the workplace and subject to a suitable home-based site being available.
- 1.4 The application shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - 1.4.1 Detailed review of roles and responsibilities;
 - 1.4.2 Draft home/on-site work plan; and,
 - 1.4.3 Completion of a personal assessment of suitability checklist for discussion with their immediate supervisor.

- 1.5 While Good Spirit School Division will endeavour to accommodate the needs of the staff members wherever possible, these arrangements are not rights and are available only after approval has been received.
- 1.6 A staff member may make an application to their immediate supervisor.

2. Approval

- 2.1 The application, upon approval and support by the immediate supervisor, Department Manager and/or Superintendent will be presented to the Director of Education.
- 2.2 Final approval will be granted in writing by the Director of Education.
- 2.3 The approval will be subject to annual review and as such will be considered to be on an ongoing trial basis.

3. Eligibility, Suitability and Home Circumstances Criteria

- 3.1 No one is obliged to do home-based working, yet any employee can ask for their position to be considered. Employees will be required to have successfully completed a suitable induction period before making such a request. In considering a request for home-based working, supervisors should consider the individual applying, the position that individual holds and home circumstances.
- 3.2 Eligibility Criteria – related to the nature of the position held by the employee.
 - 3.2.1 To establish the eligibility of an individual for home-based working, answers need to be sought to the following:
 - 3.2.1.1 Will the service to internal or external clients be unchanged or positively affected by the proposal?
 - 3.2.1.2 Can clear objectives and measurable outputs be agreed and monitored?
 - 3.2.1.3 Can work be carried out as effectively as in the designated office location, without compromising the level and quality of service?
 - 3.2.1.4 Is it possible to establish effective communication arrangements so the service is not negatively affected?
 - 3.2.1.5 Although it is accepted that there are additional costs for the equipment required for home-based workers, will there be extra costs beyond these associated with the individual employee concerned?
- 3.3 Suitability Criteria – related to the nature of the individual position holder, and the effect of home-based working on team and quality of service. The employee needs to have:
 - 3.3.1 Achieved satisfactory performance in the most recent performance review;
 - 3.3.2 Good communication skills;
 - 3.3.3 Good self-discipline and self-motivation;
 - 3.3.4 Demonstrated flexibility;

- 3.3.5 A minimal need for supervision, and be able to use their own initiative; and
- 3.3.6 Good time and workload management skills.
- And the effect on home-based working needs to:
 - 3.3.7 Leave team effectiveness unchanged and,
 - 3.3.8 Leave the quality of service provision unchanged.
- 3.4 Home circumstances criteria - the home:
 - 3.4.1 Must have a suitable space for office equipment;
 - 3.4.2 Must have suitable arrangements for security/confidentiality; and,
 - 3.4.3 Where there are dependents, these need to be managed to allow home working at agreed times.
- 3.5 Suitability assessment - the manager will consider the suitability of the staff member's work for home-based work taking into account such factors as:
 - 3.5.1 Essential requirements of the position;
 - 3.5.2 Proportion of time to be spent in home-site and work-site; and,
 - 3.5.3 Overall needs of the department/organization.
- 3.6 Duties considered suitable for home-based work may include research, data entry, projects, policy writing, report writing and planning.
- 3.7 Generally, the following types of work will not be suitable for home-based working arrangements:
 - 3.7.1 Work that requires a high degree of supervision;
 - 3.7.2 Work that requires a high degree of team work and where it would be difficult to accommodate this via the telephone/e-mail;
 - 3.7.3 Work that requires client contact that can not be achieved via telephone/e-mail;
 - 3.7.4 Work that requires the staff member to service facilities/assets; and,
 - 3.7.5 Work where the staff member has little control over the workflow or demands of the job.

4. Scheme Conditions and Responsibilities

- 4.1 Employees must:
 - 4.1.1 Have access to appropriate technology and equipment, and check it is in working order prior to each incident of home-based working;
 - 4.1.2 Review the working arrangements on a regular basis;
 - 4.1.3 Agree communication methods and contactable times with their colleagues and supervisor, and respond to voice and e-mails within agreed time frames;
 - 4.1.4 Report key issues/exceptional events that arise immediately; and,

- 4.1.5 Consider their personal circumstances, i.e. working style, and circumstances at home, before they undertake home-based working.
- 4.2 Supervisors must:
 - 4.2.1 Agree communication methods and contactable times and respond to voice and e-mails within agreed time frames;
 - 4.2.2 Ensure good communication is maintained with individual team members, regardless of whether they are home-based;
 - 4.2.3 Deal with any issues raised by the employee in a timely manner;
 - 4.2.4 Review the working arrangements on a regular basis; and,
 - 4.2.5 Agree and monitor agreed targets and outputs.
- 5. Hours of Work
 - 5.1 Home-based working may provide employees with greater flexibility with working hours.
 - 5.2 Although home-based working may allow the employee to take advantage of this flexibility, an employee's total contractual hours are not affected by home arrangements. Employees must agree to an appropriate working pattern, and any variation, with their supervisor in advance. Further, supervisors need to ensure home-based working does not lead to excessive hours being worked.
 - 5.3 A home-based worker not meeting the expectations for at-home working hours as agreed to will only defeat the purpose of the home-based work arrangement and cause you to lose the privilege of the arrangement.
- 6. Security of Data
 - 6.1 Although paper documents can be used whilst working at home, these should be returned as soon as possible.
 - 6.2 Employees must ensure that all information stored and accessed is backed up, secure and cannot be accessed by other parties.
- 7. Ceasing Home-Based Working
 - 7.1 An employee or his/her supervisor has the right to cease home-based working arrangements based on evaluation of eligibility, suitability and home circumstances criteria as outlined in clause 3 above.
 - 7.2 Notification of ceasing home-based work shall be provided in writing. The notification shall outline the reasons.

Updated: April 2012, December 2015