

Guide for Remote Work

This general guideline was developed to provide a blueprint for remote work at Caltech, to include policies, protocols, and processes governing a remote workforce.

Guidance and tools have been outlined to support both managers and employees who are navigating the suitability of remote work arrangements. Individual departments and divisions will also develop protocols and processes specific to their areas, using this as a guide. Caltech's guidance is aligned with federal and state and local law, where applicable. Changes to this document and policies may be made by the Institute with or without notice.

Guiding Principles

The workplace culture at Caltech is one that is rooted in collaboration and in providing exceptional service to our faculty, staff, and students. With appropriate use of technology and management, staff, whose roles allow for some work hours to be performed away from their regular on-site Caltech work location, may be eligible for remote work.

The return to on-site work on Campus will be gradual, methodical, and based on the implementation of applicable public health and safety protocols. Thus, remote work for a significant portion of our population will continue.

Though remote work might be a viable option for many eligible staff employees, it should not be considered a given or an entitlement. It is an option that, even if approved, can be modified or revoked by Caltech at any time.

Staff, whose work cannot be performed away from their Caltech work location, are not eligible to work remotely. In addition, operational needs and constraints may limit the ability to extend remote work to all employees who are eligible.

Remote Work Job Suitability and Work Schedules

Because Caltech is a complex organization with diverse work environments, job suitability and remote work options are offered as guidelines rather than policy as no single approach would apply to all situations. The following guidelines will help managers and employees think carefully and creatively about how a remote work arrangement can support institutional goals and improve employee satisfaction.

Job Suitability Guidelines

When reviewing jobs to determine suitability for working remotely, managers need to determine which job duties are required to be done on-site. The grid below categorizes job duties into five criteria and will aid in determining which jobs can be considered for remote work. This grid may also be used to determine suitable work schedules.

<u>Job Duty</u>	<u>What to Consider</u>
Job is considered campus critical, organizational critical, or essential reporting (reference Employment PM-9)	Consider the impact this position has to the health and safety of students, employees, and community.
Job needs daily access to on-site equipment, materials, or information	To what degree does a particular job require the use of certain on-site equipment, materials, or information?
Jobs entails interaction or customer service	Consider the degree to which each individual job requires an employee to interact live with students, employees, or customers. Consider customer migration during the pandemic and whether customers will stay virtual.
Job entails training or supervision	Some jobs require training or close supervision from a manager, given the importance of accuracy in the work performed or because regulatory requirements make this the best practice.
Job entails collaboration and innovation	Think about how much collaboration or interaction with other employees is required, whether in the same job function or across functions. Although some training can be done remotely, there is a positive benefit of in-person training.

Highly complex work requiring a high level of collaboration and specific equipment or materials will be particularly challenging in a remote environment and may not be conducive to remote work. Work that requires a moderate level of collaboration, but is somewhat less complex, may allow for a hybrid model. By considering the relationship of these factors for each of your core functions, you can determine the degree of remote readiness you may have in your organization. This will allow you to develop a return-to-work plan accordingly.

Remote Work Guidelines

1. Remote work options should support Institute and organizational goals, including cost-effectiveness and customer service.
2. Jobs should be appropriate for the remote/hybrid work option.

3. Equipment, systems, or materials must be available during non-traditional hours or outside of the workplace to support arrangement, if necessary.
4. If available, an employee's performance history should support the requirements of the option (e.g., ability to work independently without direct supervision and demonstrated ability to meet job expectations). Any active disciplinary action should be considered.
5. Written plans should be developed and approved for the remote work arrangement to document the understanding between all involved parties.
6. Managers and organizational leadership should approve the plan and be prepared to manage the work under the conditions of the arrangement. Each organization must determine the appropriate individual(s) to approve these arrangements in addition to the immediate manager. Organizational leadership should be fully supportive of the remote work model.
7. Special protocols for communication and accountability should be established.
8. An effort should be made to maintain a collaborative environment, through special opportunities for staff members to have shared hours and constructive interactions with the rest of the organization.
9. A trial period will be required with each remote work arrangement prior to making a longer-term commitment by either the manager or staff member.
10. All parties should be prepared to return to pre-remote working arrangements if the goals of the remote work arrangement are not being met.

If fully working remotely is not an option due to job eligibility or infrastructure constraints, a rubric for [Remote Work Schedules](#) will help guide managers in choosing the appropriate remote work schedule. Managers should reference [PM 11-5 Remote Work](#) for details and approval of remote work.

Organizational Considerations

There are many questions to consider when developing a hybrid/remote work model. In this new reality, the manager is tasked with addressing challenges and opportunities related to staffing, as well as employee performance, engagement, and well-being, and the most effective use of available resources.

- What processes and practices do you need to approach differently in a remote/hybrid work environment?
- How do we support our employees to create work-life boundaries in a world where office and home are one in the same?

- How will you support organizational goals and the Institute mission while promoting a remote/hybrid workplace?
- What are the costs and benefits of different options?
- How will you manage remote/hybrid work to foster community and inclusivity?
- How do you promote creativity and collaborative teamwork in a remote/hybrid workplace?
- How do you manage issues that may arise when you cannot accommodate everyone's preferred work model?

Answers to some of these questions may come easily while others prove more challenging. Employee & Organizational Development (EOD) in Human Resources at Caltech can provide assistance to managers as they work through organization modeling.

Alternatives to Remote Work

Not all organizations at Caltech can support remote work and not all positions are suitable for it. Jobs that require an employee to work with materials or in facilities onsite (such as groundskeeping or dining services) are not suitable for the remote work option. In such cases, other types of work arrangements may offer a similar benefit. Please work with Employee and Organizational Development when considering the following alternatives:

Flexible Work Options: Flexible work options offer alternative approaches to getting work done through non-traditional work hours and/or job structures. They offer creative approaches for completing work while promoting balance between work and personal commitments and can result in a more positive and productive work environment.

Alternative Workweek Schedule: Any regularly scheduled workweek requiring an employee to work more than eight hours in a 24-hour period but no more than 10 hours of work per day or more than 40 hours of work in a workweek. An Alternative Workweek Schedule may be established with approval from management plus an election by affected employees. For additional information on the election process, please reference Alternate Workweek Schedules, [PM 11-4](#), and contact Human Resources.

Job Sharing: A job share arrangement is a full-time job split between two individuals, each with responsibility for the success of the total job, typically with prorated salary, benefits and paid time off. Creative and innovative schedules can be designed to meet the needs of the job sharers and the department. Job-sharing arrangements can be 50/50, 60/40 or any similar combination. The schedules may also overlap as needed or desired.

Flextime: Flextime is the most commonly requested, the easiest to manage and the most affordable flexible work option. It offers flexibility in arrival and departure times,

typically with a designated two or three hour onsite work window during which all staff members are present.

Establishing Effective Remote Work Practices

Manager's Role

Managers need to be fully vested and committed to supporting their remote work program if remote employees are to be successful.

The success of a department's remote work program depends on regular, routine participation by employees at all levels. Experience is the only way to enable managers, employees, IMSS support, and other stakeholders to work through any technology, equipment, communications, workflow, and associated issues that may effect the success of remote work.

Individuals who are expected or anticipated to work remotely in an emergency situation, including managers, should be encouraged to work remotely with some frequency under non-emergency circumstances. Managers should make it a point to regularly participate in remote work in order to lead by example and be comfortable in dealing with the dynamics of managing in a remote work environment.

To establish effective remote work practices, the manager should:

- Ensure the arrangement aligns with the department's goals, including productivity, cost-effectiveness, and service to internal and external customers.
- Provide professional and personal support to teams by planning, coordinating and communicating as thoughtfully and efficiently as possible.
- Work collaboratively with staff to address problems and/or obstacles, addressing challenges and opportunities related to staffing, as well as employee performance, engagement, and well-being, and the most effective use of resources available.
- Clearly communicate defined tasks and expectations.
- Measure performance through results and behaviors.
- Provide regular feedback on performance.
- Be willing to reverse a remote work arrangement if it is not serving the needs of the department or individual.
- Set expectations for procedures and guidelines for remote work arrangements with all staff.

Employee's Role

Employees need to assess the suitability of a remote work arrangement and whether they can successfully perform their job duties long-term in a remote or hybrid

environment. Transition from an onsite role to a remote work arrangement will require the following:

The employee should ask themselves if they are self-directed. A remote work arrangement requires self-discipline and motivation.

The employee will need to be able to effectively prioritize work to ensure they are meeting performance expectations. The manager will not be able to see what the employee is working on throughout the workday in a remote work arrangement. It is important to distinguish between being 'busy' and being productive, as the employee's job performance will be judged primarily on their productivity.

If the employee needs regular supervision and in-person contact with their manager or colleagues, a remote work arrangement may not be suitable.

Remote work can come with personal distractions. The employee will need to establish boundaries between work and personal time. Having a dedicated workspace as well as communicating clearly with others in their remote work environment regarding availability will be necessary. It may be helpful to share [Remote Work Best Practices](#) with employees.

Regular evaluation of the remote work arrangement with the manager. The employee will be expected to be receptive to feedback and modifications to the remote work arrangement.

Clearly communicate progress with defined tasks and expectations, as well as any barriers that are preventing the completion of work assignments.

Finally, the employee will need to understand, sign and adhere to the expectations outlined in the [Remote Work Agreement](#).

Tools and Resources

[Technology and Communication](#)

Effective communication will require the utilization of technology.

Communication and impromptu updates that happen naturally in a shared space will now require planning and effort in a remote work environment. Team meetings are an ideal setting to get everyone on the same page. In a remote work environment, assume all meetings will have a mix of in-person and virtual participants.

All scheduled meetings should include a virtual communication platform (e.g.- Zoom, MS Teams, Slack, etc.) to facilitate participation of all employees. Encourage or, as appropriate, require the use of the video camera to promote team connection.

- Does everyone have access to the technology that enables virtual communications?
- Do team members know how to use the available technology and communication platforms? If not, what training is available to them?
- It is the responsibility of the manager to notify staff which meetings require physical presence.
- Managers need to be thoughtful about meeting participation and set clear expectations about attendance, and whether it is required or optional.
- Regular team meetings should occur more frequently because there are less opportunities for impromptu meetings and casual check-ins in a remote work environment.
- Select a meeting time when all required participants can attend unless an extenuating circumstance arises.
- Keep scheduled team meetings, even if they end early. Even a quick exchange will strengthen team connection.
- Clearly communicate the purpose of the meeting in advance. (e.g.: Is it a casual check-in to provide the team with an opportunity to socialize? Is it a working meeting? Is it a project specific meeting?)

[Tools for Remote Work](#)

A remote work environment requires an evaluation of the tools that will allow employees to stay productive and connected.

The manager and their team should evaluate and determine which tool(s) the team will utilize to:

- Share project status, see all the work in one place, and prevent duplication of efforts.
- Conduct meetings in a remote work environment. Ask what tools can be transferred from an in-person team environment, what needs to be modified, and what will be most effective for the work and the individuals. Together, decide when and how the tool(s) will be utilized.
- Communicate team availability, to include who is working remotely, who is working onsite, who is on vacation, etc., and how best to share this information. (e.g.: Outlook calendar, email, etc.)
- Establish norms around appropriate tool usage:

- When and how should a particular tool be utilized? (MS Teams, Zoom, IM, email, phone, etc.)
- What is the best method for an employee to address an urgent or sensitive matter?
- When is it best to communicate via a call (telephone or virtual conferencing platform) instead of an email?
- The appropriate response time within which individuals can expect a response back from one another.
- Lastly, be sure to remember the internal and external customers. How will the team communicate with them?

How will employees access documents and other information remotely? Accelerating the move to an electronic office is not limited to cost savings; it also addresses the need to access information remotely.

Remember that it may take time for people to get used to new communication and technology norms.

Performance Management

Managing team performance is about setting expectations, communicating them, and measuring performance outcomes in relation to these expectations. However, managing and maximizing team performance in a remote work environment can be a challenging task if you do not have a good plan in place. It is important to:

- Provide clear expectations and goals for all employees, including behavioral expectations and achievable goals that guide their work. Hold employees accountable to meet these expectations.
- Set measurable goals for everyone on your team so that you can clearly evaluate their work.
- Set regular meetings to assess the progress and status of current assignments, provide feedback on opportunity areas, and discuss goals for the employee's development.
- When a goal or deadline has been missed or you identify an opportunity to provide constructive feedback, do so promptly. Timely feedback is important to ensure that the employee is aware of the issue(s) and knows what to do to correct it.
- Measure results instead of measuring the time spent on the computer.
- Be clear regarding roles, job responsibilities, and expectations. This becomes even more critical when team members work from multiple locations. Ensure everyone on the team understands their role and specifically state your expectations regarding how far their responsibilities extend.

- Establish processes and systems that eliminate guesswork around assignments and what employees are doing while working remotely.

It is important to note that performance management in a remote work environment is built on a foundation of trust and measurable outcomes that are specifically tied to the employee's responsibilities and assignments.

Performance managing remote workers will require a new mindset. You need to ask yourself what you imagine remote work to be and how this aligns with the employee's view of how they will work remotely. Any gaps in your expectations and that of the employee need to be addressed.

Resources for Remote Employee Wellness

[Worklife@Caltech](#)

Human Resources offers a number of wellness activities through their Worklife@Caltech programming suitable for remote workers. Supporting our remote employees in their efforts at finding balance in their different roles - employee, child, parent, spouse, partner, sibling, friend, neighbor, co-worker- is key to having an effective, happy, and flourishing workforce. Work-life harmony is the healthy integration of work and personal priorities and is achievable. Find resources at [worklife@caltech](#).

[Staff and Faculty Consultation Center \(SFCC\)](#)

SFCC is available to assist employees and their families to balance the complex demands of work and personal life whether on campus or working remotely. Telephonic or video counseling is available, and you can access this service using most smartphones, tablets and computers with a camera. You may contact SFCC via email at SFCC@caltech.edu or by calling 626-395-8360. Additionally, you can text 626-406-1733 with your first name and a callback number and a counselor will respond within 24 hours, excluding Saturday and Sundays. Materials and resources can be found at the [SFCC Resource Library](#).

Training

To ensure the success of employees working with approved remote work arrangements, training is available on various topics that provide information, development, resources and support to remote employees.

Managers, supervisors, and leads have access to content that includes best practices specific to the management of virtual teams/remote workers.

Sessions for employees include resources and information that set the framework for expected communication, performance, conflict resolution, compliance with Institute policies and practices, and parameters around the remote work.

To access available training, please visit the [Remote Work website](#).

Working in Office Environments

It is necessary and desirable to have a workforce on campus to facilitate productivity and effectively advance the research mission of Caltech. As we bring employees back to Campus, it is important to evaluate tools that support business operations both on site and remotely. A revised Return to Workplace guide as well on campus readiness analytical tools found in the plan and prepare section of the [remote work website](#) will help managers navigate the remote vs onsite landscape.

Expenses

Equipment

Caltech will provide reasonable and necessary equipment (computer, webcam, headset, privacy screens, pens, and papers) to enable remote employees to perform their work. The employee may be responsible for other expenses.

The employee should obtain approval from their manager for other business-related expenses (e.g., shipping) that are reasonably incurred in carrying out their job. Approved expenses will be reimbursed by the employee's organization.

Travel

If the employee requested to work remotely, the employee is responsible for all commuting expenses (automobile, plane, etc.) when required to travel to Campus.

Policies and Governance

The Institute has policies and protocols that support remote work. In addition to the newly drafted policy on [Remote Work \(PM 11-5\)](#), below are policies to offer guidance on matters related to wage and hour, benefits, pay, and employment.

[Remote Work Agreement](#)

[Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources](#)

[PM 9 Employment](#)

[PM 11 Hours of Work, Workweek, Workday, Shifts, Overtime, Pay Premiums](#)

[PM 11-3 Employee Timekeeping, Meal, Rest and Recovery/Cool Down Periods, Make Up Time](#)

[PM 11-4 Alternate Workweek Schedules for Non-Exempt Employees at Campus \(AWS\)](#)

[PM 11-5 Remote Work](#)

[PM 15-2 Paid Time Off for Benefit-based](#)

[PM 15-8 Employees Paid Time Off for Non-Benefit Based Employees](#)