



Employee and Labor Relations

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Supervisor and Manager Guide to the Future of Work at NMSU*

* Referenced material

- Chancellor and President Communications, dated May 7, 2021
- State of NM COVID Practices
- HR/EHS&RM Future of Work Tiger Team
- Employment & Compensation
- Center for Learning and Professional Development (CLPD)
- ICT Future of Work Tiger Team
- Adapted from the Telework Suitability Guide for Virginia Tech

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Supervisor and Manager Guide to the Future of Work

Purpose

This document helps university supervisors and managers in developing a plan for the future of work for their individual units. The guide includes telework management information and tools, how to determine what positions and employees are well-suited for regular or occasional telework/remote work, re-envisioning the workspace, workplace safety and data security, and ensuring employee success and wellness.

Chancellor Arvizu and President Floros Communication (May 7, 2021) – [Planning for Fall, 2021](#)

In preparation for Fall Semester (conventional fall opening), all departments/colleges need to complete a Transition/Return Plan. Each college or administrative unit's plan is to be completed no later than June 15 and implemented, no later than August 2.

Re-envisioning the Future of Work

We can create better and more productive workspaces. One of the most exciting opportunities before us is the chance to re-envision how we work. We learned that sharing a purpose, rather than a physical space, is more important in achieving great results. Teams, groups, units and departments can re-imagine how they will effectively meet their mission from remote locations and by collaborating across time and space.

- Re-envision the office space and consider shared spaces or “hoteling.”
- Hybrid meetings and the flexibility to work from home are standard practice now.
- Continuous improvement is ongoing and a natural part of our daily work, such as increased services to the cloud and other technological advances. New, innovative and creative ideas are encouraged and celebrated.
- Address technology challenges and the distribution of computers and equipment, as employees need access to technology whether on campus or off campus.

Planning and adaptability are key. Change will continue, and we need to be flexible to deal with that change. Knowing how to adapt becomes clearer if we follow basic principles. Ours are:

- We will carry out the mission of New Mexico State University.
- We will prioritize the safety and health of our students and employees.
- We will always look to internal and external expertise and constituents for guidance.

Department Autonomy. Each office sets their own parameters for their department return plan.

- Some offices can remain remote, while others, especially those who serve students, may have an on-campus presence.
- How best to provide customer service, high performance, effectiveness and efficiency should be considered in crafting department plans.
- Managers may have their employees stagger their work schedules and come into the office a few days a week.
- Ensure fair treatment of employees and employees toward each other.
- Address equity concerns properly and promptly addressed. There will be people who have the same job titles and job descriptions, and some will be able to work from home while others could be required to work from campus.
- NMSU is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Decisions are not to made on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, retaliation, serious medical condition, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, spousal affiliation, or protected veteran status.

Agility. Manage toward building a highly engaged workforce and a more resilient department.

- Continue to enhance your knowledge and use of effective digital collaboration platforms (Zoom, Teams, etc.)
- Allow for an employee's personal choice in determining how work gets done.
- Establish new scheduling and meeting norms.
- Provide needed technologies for your staff and allow them time for training.
- Encourage employees to configure their physical workspace at home for optimal effectiveness.
- Become knowledgeable of EAP services and know when to refer employees for assistance.

Workplace Plans

Start planning now for what your unit will look like for a more conventional campus community. All plans must address the following key elements:

- A list of functions that must take place on campus to support our mission;
- An assessment of safety and risk points, such as proximity of staff and interface with the public, and review by EHS & RM if operating differently than before;
- Mitigation plans for each of these risk points, including safety practices such as workspace or schedule modifications, personal protective equipment usage, controlled public access, and training; and
- An assessment of potential internal action triggers, such as an employee who reports likely exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

While planning, keep in mind these guiding principles:

- Understand and mitigate individuals' risk related to COVID-19;
- Protect the health and wellness of the NMSU community and the communities we serve; and
- Support the mission, vision, goals, and values of NMSU LEADS 2025.

NMSU COVID Safe Practices

All functions providing on campus support are required to deploy COVID Safe Practices (CSP).

- NMSU no longer requires that fully vaccinated people wear face coverings in classrooms and laboratories.
- An assessment of safety and risk points, such as proximity of staff in the office and interface with the public.
- A mitigation plan for risk points, including safety practices such as workspace or schedule modifications, personal protective equipment usage, controlled public access, and training will be based on NMSU, NM Department of Health, and CDC directives.
- Signs supporting the COVID Safe Practices will remain visual in offices.
- An assessment of potential internal action triggers, such as an employee who reports likely exposure to the COVID-19 virus will be reported to the Aggie Wellness Center and Environmental Health Safety & Risk Management (EHS & RM).
- Plexiglass sneeze guards will be installed where regular interaction is common.

Required Behavior

All employees are required to exhibit the following behavior:

- Adhere to required COVID-Safe Practices that apply to all State of New Mexico employers.
- Adhere to maximum occupancy and staffing limits per the State's Public Health Order.
- Schedule daily cleaning and sanitization of offices. Each unit shall regularly clean and sanitize shared workstations that they utilize.
- Ensure sanitization of communal dishware and provide single-use items in the breakrooms if/when possible.

Acknowledge the difficulties in returning to campus. After spending more than a year trying to avoid people, re-engaging with others seems risky. People have concerns not just for their health, but for that of elderly parents or family members with underlying conditions.

- Employees can get help dealing with anxiety at NMSU's Employee Assistance Program. <https://benefits.nmsu.edu/other/eap/>
- It is important to listen to employees, meet them where they are in the COVID experience.
- Consider how to support employees with wellness. Employees have been through a great deal of change and many are feeling anxious or isolated, so consider what is needed to help them transition back to in-person work.
 - Yoga or meditation breaks during the day
 - Flexible scheduling
 - Communication, empathy, patience and flexibility

Employee Safety and Wellness

NMSU Directive – Vaccination and Face Coverings

NMSU is currently planning to require all employees at all campuses and offices statewide to provide proof of vaccination or proof of a negative COVID-19 test on a weekly basis. NMSU's Las Cruces campus offers vaccinations Monday through Friday at [Aggie Health and Wellness Center](#).

The benefits to vaccination:

- All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be safe and effective at preventing COVID-19.
- The CDC has shown COVID-19 vaccines also prevent COVID-related severe illness, hospitalization, and death.
- Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, [particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#).

Additional details:

- Anyone, regardless of vaccination status, may continue wearing a face covering in any setting as added protection.
- All employees, regardless of vaccination status, must resume wearing face coverings and practice social distancing in all indoor and [some outdoor situations](#).
- Specific face-covering expectations within units should be clearly defined in fall return plans, posted on building/area entrances, and communicated to affected employees and students.
- Individuals with special considerations regarding face coverings should work with a supervisor, Human Resource Services, or the Office of Institutional Equity to explore potential accommodations.

Employee wellness and support. Employee wellness and support are important and should be properly addressed.

- Seek a balance between NMSU needs and goals and that of employees' personal needs.
- Assist (within professional and operational parameters) employee personal challenges (support the whole person).
- Provide opportunities to cross-train employees, or utilize flex-scheduling.
- Deploy employee activities and/or refer employees to services that will assist them in minimizing employee stress.
 - Employee fun event: A day where employees working on campus dressed "Zoom ready"
 - Referral to resources that can assist employees with elder care and childcare
- Lighthearted messages/communication may be helpful during the transition.
- Effectively address workplace hesitancy/resistance (employees not wanting but are needed to return to campus).
- Consider relaxing the department dress code as employees transition back to campus.

Classrooms have been, and will continue to be, very safe. We developed simple classroom protocols based on advice from the [NMDOH](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and](#)

Prevention and in collaboration with the Higher Education Department. The guidance from these agencies evolves as conditions change, and our practices will continue to be based on their best advice.

- Remember that some employees have been on campus throughout the pandemic. Our campus is a safe environment, due to the safety protocols and practices that have been implemented.
- Faculty and staff who interact directly with students should provide them with consistent person-to-person interaction.

We have learned how to extend this safety to other activities and spaces. A vibrant campus life is key to the college experience, and we are getting there. We are becoming adept at organizing activities outside and for smaller groups, and engaging online is allowing us to reach off-campus students.

Telework/Remote Work for NMSU Employees

During the COVID-19 pandemic NMSU moved to essential operations, transitioning much of our workforce to remote work. As the university is moving into the Future of Work, university leaders, managers, and faculty and staff need to determine what positions and employees are well suited for regular or occasional telework/remote work.

Recognizing that some work can only be done on site, NMSU supports the use of appropriate flexible and alternative work options for employees where remote work or telework is an option. This **Guide** is designed to help supervisors determine how to use the university's approved Alternative Work Arrangement to support employee flexibility and department goals.

In order to meet the needs of NMSU employees, while providing support for operations, it is recommended that employees be allowed to continue to work remotely when their job responsibilities allow it. Supervisors are asked to be flexible with employees while maintaining clear performance expectations. Conversations between supervisors and employees should include:

- **Hours of work/schedule:** If an employee is actively caring for a child or family member, that time is not considered work time; appropriate leave should be used during those times.
- **Balance of presence in virtual and on-site meetings:** Supervisors should set clear expectations on how employees should participate in meetings. Zoom or Teams should continue to be used to provide all meeting attendees the opportunity to participate.
- **Expectations for focused, uninterrupted time for completing job responsibilities and attending meetings.** If an employee is unable to set boundaries for work time then the employee is expected to use leave.
- **Performance management expectations,** metrics of monitoring work performance and creating a plan that sets standards for measuring productivity.

- **Guidance** for entering into an Alternative Work Arrangement.

Alternative Work Arrangement

ARP 6.87 – Establishing an Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA) <https://arp.nmsu.edu/6-87/> facilitates enhanced flexibility in working conditions by permitting alternative work arrangements (AWA). The rule also supports Goal 4 of the NMSU LEADS 2025 Strategic Plan, Build a Robust University System. Specifically, this rule promotes the ability to get work done most productively by balancing work requirements with the needs of university employees. This rule provides policy and procedural guidance for supervisors and employees who wish to explore either short or longer-term AWA, including telework, flextime, a staggered work schedule or compressed work week.

Supervisors must have all their employees who are on an alternative work arrangement, including teleworking, complete an AWA Request Form. The time frame for current employees is July 1 of each year. The form has valuable information in it for both the supervisor and the employee.

Telework and Remote Work defined

Remote work and telework are terms used interchangeably for describing university work occurring at a location other than the principle work site.

Two critical steps must be followed to determine telework/remote work suitability:

1. Determine the suitability of **positions** based on **job duties and responsibilities**.
2. Determine the suitability of **employees** based on **past work performance**.

Determining which positions are conducive to telework/remote work

A **position** can be considered suitable for telework/remote work if some or most of its responsibilities can be performed away from the regular work location. The change in work location should not impact productivity, customer service, operational efficiency, or team collaboration. The determination should be first based on the **type of work**, not just on employee performance. **The list below is merely a suggestion and is certainly not an exhaustive list.**

Typical roles may include, but are not limited to:

- Accountant or Bookkeeper
- Software Developer, Engineer or Computer Programmer
- Graphic Designer
- Administrative Assistant
- Web Designer
- HR Specialist
- Database Analyst
- Research Assistant
- And more!

Typical tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- Auditing
- Analyzing Data
- Budgeting
- Calculating
- Computer Programming
- Data Analysis and Entry
- Editing
- Graphics Work
- Programming
- Project Management
- Processing Employment Actions
- Research
- Software Development
- Writing

Each position should be considered individually, per the responsibilities of the role, to determine if the work can be done outside of the regular work environment.

Previous success with Information Technology (IT) and access to internet/Wi-Fi networks also plays a large part in determining telework and remote work ability.

- Is the employee able to have access to the needed equipment to perform their job functions?
- Do they have access to Wi-Fi to be able to complete their tasks, and communicate with their supervisor and team?
- Do the employee's core responsibilities require access to equipment, materials and files that can only be accessed on site?

- Is the employee required to be on site for face-to-face meetings with supervisors, other employees, students or customers? Or can this contact be done electronically?

Remote Site Equipment

Supervisors and employees should discuss any equipment or technology access the employee will need to telework. NMSU has no obligation to provide hardware for AWA arrangements. Employees must protect NMSU-owned equipment, records, and materials from unauthorized or accidental access, use, modification, destruction, or disclosure. In the event of equipment failure or service interruption, the employee must notify employer immediately to discuss alternate assignments or other options.

- AWA employees are expected to have:
 - Consistent availability by cell phone or landline
 - Fluency in Zoom, Microsoft Office 365 SharePoint, Teams, and other relevant software
 - Consistent access to a laptop or desktop with high-speed internet

Data Security and Confidentiality

Employees working pursuant to an AWA must maintain the security and confidentiality of institutional data and comply with all software licensing agreements. Sensitive data should not be placed on a personal computer or device but instead should be accessed via secure technology and in accordance with NMSU data security protocols. Employees, along with their supervisors, should create formal plans for maintaining the security and confidentiality of university records while working remotely.

Workplace Safety

Employees with an AWA are expected to maintain their remote workplace in a safe manner, free from safety hazards. Injuries sustained by the employee in a remote office location and in conjunction with the employee's regular work duties are subject to the NMSU workers' compensation policy (See [ARP 8.72 – Workers' Compensation Benefits and Other Assistance](#)), and subject to the requirement to notify their supervisor about on-the-job injuries as soon as practicable. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by unauthorized visitors to the employee's alternate workplace. NMSU retains the right to make prearranged, on-site inspections of the alternate workplace during scheduled work hours.

Hybrid Roles

Some roles may be suited for a certain amount of telework even if many of the responsibilities must be done at the regular work location. These roles could be considered for a limited amount of telework/remote work. This is considered a hybrid telework role and is likely to be the model for most teams. Desk and office sharing options will also be pursued for hybrid telework employees. Preference will be given to employees based on the percentage of time they work on site.

Periodic Assessment of AWA

The AWA arrangement should be evaluated by the supervisor on an ongoing basis to ensure that employee's work quality, efficiency, and productivity are not compromised by the AWA arrangement, and to determine whether the AWA should continue to remain in effect.

Determining the suitability of specific employees who are interested in teleworking/remote working

Once it has been determined that all or some of the role responsibilities can be performed outside of the regular work environment, it must be identified if the **employee** in this role is compatible to telework opportunities.

This must be considered on a case-by-case basis for current employees and must be considered when interviewing candidates for a remote or telework position.

The telework/remote work approval or denial determination is made by the employee's manager. This determination should be made from an employee's individualized request based on their manager's assessment of their suitability for telework.

Factors for this determination should include but are not limited to:

- Employee's most recent performance history (including disciplinary action).
- Employee's time management and organizational skills.
- Whether the employee has the necessary computer skills to complete their required job functions outside of the office.
- Whether the employee understands their role and expectations, and requires little supervision to complete their tasks.
- The employee's propensity to be a self-starter and consistently meet deadlines.

Keep in mind:

- If the employee is not well suited for telework/remote work or is denied based on a previously documented performance issue, it is best practice to communicate that reasoning with the employee.
 - A discussion about job performance and growth opportunities should be had between the employee and their supervisor before the option for telework can be re-assessed in the future.
 - Supervisors should keep documentation of telework agreement approvals and denials for each employee.

- As a supervisor, if you are unsure of how to approach this conversation with your employee, please contact Employee & Labor Relations elr@nmsu.edu for guidance.
- The employee is in charge of setting up their own workspace in a telework environment, including adequate access to the internet and a quiet place for calls or video meetings.
 - Employees should work with managers to establish work hours.
 - Employees should designate “office” space and get ICT support for their setup.
 - Employees should try to minimize distractions in this work area.
 - Employees should be cognizant of how their environment appears during video meetings.
 - Employees should be aware of their child/eldercare obligations during work hours and find adequate support for these needs to assure an uninterrupted work environment.

Manager Responsibility to Ensure Telework/ Remote Work Success

A manager should consider their own management and supervision style, as well as their level of trust in the employee to perform their assigned job duties in a telework/remote work environment. A manager should gauge how telework/remote work fits the employee, manager, and role together.

Employee & Manager Training to Ensure Telework/ Remote Work Success

Once it has been determined that both the role and the employee are suitable for telework/remote work, the employee and the manager should complete the appropriate training recommended by the Center for Learning & Professional Development and found in the table below.

Recommended Manager Training

- Telework for Supervisors
- Managing the Return to the Workplace
- Return to Campus
- Time Management
- Goal Setting
- Constructive Meetings

Recommended Employee Training

- Telework for Employees
- Return to Campus
- Time Management
- Goal Setting

We strongly encourage that supervisors and employees complete the additional optional trainings listed below because they offer helpful information to ensure a successful telework/ remote work environment. The trainings can provide additional telework coaching, resources, and guidelines.

Optional Manager Training

- Forming a Community Through Teamwork and Communication
- Ten Stress Management Tips
- Facilitating Employee Success: Coaching, Mentoring and Engagement
- Work-Life Balance for Supervisors
- Emotional Intelligence for Supervisors

Optional Employee Training

- Communication Breakthrough
- Ten Stress Management Tips

Courses are completed through Training Central <https://trainingcentral.nmsu.edu> , where other virtual training opportunities can be found related to learning, leading, and working.

Tips for Entering into a Telework Agreement

Be Specific:

After determining that both the role and employee are suitable for telework/remote work and both the manager and employee have completed their training courses, it is now time to create a telework agreement that establishes the specifics.

This should include, but is not limited to:

- Days of the week that the employee can telework/remote work.
- Expectations of the level of communication and responsiveness on telework/remote workdays, from both the employee and the manager.
- Expectations of attendance for meetings and other interactions across the university and with customers.
- Any other expectations of work to be done and metrics on how this work will be tracked.

Expectations for communication between both the employee and manager should be identified and discussed ahead of time, to include:

- Balance of presence in virtual and on-site meetings.
- Performance management expectations and metrics of monitoring work performance.
- Physical space arrangement and accommodations, including the technology necessary to perform work functions outside of the office.
- Balance of employee childcare or eldercare needs. (Telecommuting/remote work is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate child/eldercare)
- Managing various work styles, including communication expectations from both manager and employee. (Mediums to be considered in maintaining communication, including Zoom, email, phone, Microsoft Teams, etc.)
- Managing other distractions at home and setting expectations for professionalism to include the acceptability of a more informal dress code.

Develop the Alternative Work Arrangement:

You must review the Alternative Work Arrangements Policy. [ARP 6.87 – Establishing an Alternative Work Arrangement \(AWA\)](#). Employees and supervisors must also complete an AWA Form and submit it to Human Resource Services. [Alternative Work Arrangement Form](#). A new AWA, or changes to your current AWA, require completion of a new AWA Form. A new AWA Form must be completed by July 1st of each year. AWAs must be revisited and renewed annually.

Tax Implications

Out-of-state teleworking/remote working arrangements may introduce tax withholding and reporting, unemployment insurance, benefits, and workers compensation requirements in the employee's state of residence, among other considerations. A four to six-week lead time may be required between notification of the out-of-state teleworking/remote working arrangement and the start date of the arrangement in order to avoid state reporting and withholding penalties, interest, and late fees. Contact the Aggie Service Center (Payroll office) for additional guidance.

Employees must ensure that their home address is current in Banner Self-Serve, particularly those working from a location out-of-state.

Travel

Flexible work and teleworking employees are not eligible for travel expense reimbursement when they commute to and from the University locations for work purposes. Teleworking employees may be eligible for travel reimbursement, in accordance with current University policies, for meetings and business events that take place off the campus (e.g. travel from/to the teleworking site to a location away from the campus).

Roles and Responsibilities

Supervisors are encouraged to support the AWA employee by:

- Encouraging goal-setting and organizational planning
- Giving appropriate and timely feedback
- Incorporating the employee into daily workflows and meetings
- Communicating AWA arrangements with their core team
- Utilizing shared calendars
- Managing by measuring results and outcomes
- Trusting the employee's ability to perform

Employees will:

- Check in with the supervisor to discuss status and open issues
- Be available for teleconferences, scheduled on an as-needed basis
- Be available to come into the office if a business need arises
- Disallow business invitees at a home workplace used for telework (business and academic meetings and activities must occur at NMSU in a workplace suitable for the required meeting or activity)
- Request supervisor's approval in advance of working any overtime hours (if employee is non-exempt)
- Request supervisor approval to use vacation, sick, or other leave in the same manner as when working at employee's regular NMSU workplace
- Remain accessible during the AWA work schedule

Resources

- Five Key Stress Resilience Skills: <https://www.stressresilientmind.co.uk/articles/five-key-stress-resilience-skills>
- 6 unconventional ways to build focus, resilience, and calm in 2021: <https://blog.rescuetime.com/unconventional-advice-for-2021/>
- A Remote Work Future at Duke: <https://today.duke.edu/2021/04/remote-work-future-duke>
- What's Next for the Higher Education Workforce? A Look at the Challenges and Opportunities that Lie Ahead: <https://www.cupahr.org/issue/feature/whats-next-for-the-higher-ed-workforce/>
- Flexible Work Is the Future of Work — Seizing the “New Normal” for Increased Engagement and Productivity: <https://www.cupahr.org/blog/flexible-work-is-the-future-of-work/>

Contact

The Office of Employee & Labor Relations can be reached at elr@nmsu.edu to provide guidance for managers and supervisors as they navigate their plans for the Future of Work at NMSU.