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Alternate Workplace Arrangements (AWA) – Implementation Guidelines

Effective March 17, 2006 the GSA laid down federal agency real property guidelines for the establishment of teleworking/telecommuting alternate workplace arrangements. These guidelines can and should be addressed by private organizations implementing AWA.

Teleworking and telecommuting are used interchangeably and are defined as the "act of performing all or a portion of work functions at an alternative worksite, such as working at home or a telework center, under circumstances that reduce or eliminate the employee's commute." To be considered telework, it must "occur at least one day per week on a regular basis and does not include (1) situational telework (unscheduled, project-oriented, non-recurring, and/or irregular telework and/or teleworking that occurs less frequently than once a week on a recurring basis) or (2) full-time mobile work arrangements."

AWA includes telecommuting, hoteling (non-dedicated, non-permanent workspace assigned by reservation on an as-needed basis), hot desking (non-dedicated, non-permanent workspace assigned on a first come, first served basis), telework centers (providing workspace and support on a fee for use basis) and virtual offices.

Agencies are authorized to provide/procure equipment including computers and related hardware and software, desks, chairs, facsimile machines, printers and etc. as long as it is understood that it is the property of the Government and there is an audit trail indicating the location of the equipment.

Agencies are also authorized to reimburse employees for the installation of telephone lines and necessary equipment and pay monthly charges if they are in direct support of the agency's mission. This authority also includes internet services, broadband access, e-mail services, voice over IP equipment and services, desktop videoconference equipment and services and any other telecommunications equipment and service needed by individuals working in home-based AWA.

Utility costs for home-based AWA are not reimbursable, due to the difficulty in determining a fair and reasonable amount to be reimbursed, as are federal taxes since the federal agencies are exempt.

The costs associated with relocation and re-setup of AWA is the responsibility of the agency if the relocation was required by the agency.

The full text of these guidelines can be seen in the Federal Register dated March 17, 2006 (Volume 71, Number 52), Pages 13845-13848.