

## The 6 Benefits Of Telework That Federal Agencies Report to Congress.

-Better Emergency Preparedness

-Better Performance

-Healthier Workers

-Low Cost

-Clean Environment

-Low Turnover

### **Telework Benefits Our Government. Why Are Agencies Trying to Slash It?**

Like many U.S. companies, the U.S. federal government has adopted telework and enjoyed its many benefits. It has successfully used telework to meet its goal of providing excellent service to the American people.

[Find out more about the benefits of telework »](#)

[Technology has changed the way we work. More than 4.7 million U.S. employees now work from home](#) at least half the time, an increase of 159% since 2005.

Even Bill Gates thinks telework and other flexible work arrangements are the most important perk companies can give the best employees, and a new Harvard [study](#) backs him up.

Like many U.S. companies, the U.S. federal government has adopted telework and enjoyed its many benefits. It has successfully used telework to meet its goal of providing excellent service to the American people.

However, several agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Veterans Affairs, are imposing substantial limits on telework even though the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in its annual [reports](#) to Congress, has touted the many benefits of telework and how well it is working at various agencies.

“When implemented as a strategic management tool, robust and well-practiced telework programs improve staff performance and engagement, and maximize organizational mission productivity, efficiency, and government stewardship,” [said Acting OPM Director Margaret Weichert](#). “I commend federal agencies for their commitment to leverage telework as part of a

suite of key human capital management strategies that attract, develop, and retain a high performing, engaged, and diverse Federal workforce.”

With all these benefits, we can't help but wonder if the Trump administration is once again cutting off the nose to spite the face.

Regardless, here are 6 undeniable benefits of telework as the government itself [reported](#) to Congress:

### **1. Better emergency preparedness**

Telework improves agencies' emergency preparedness since agencies can continue to operate during bad weather or a natural disaster.

In the latest report to Congress released January 2019, OPM highlighted the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the role of its telework program during emergencies:

“The agency has benefited from telework during emergencies and agency closures through continuity of operations (COOP). We were able to continue operations after Hurricane Harvey devastated parts of Texas and Hurricane Maria devastated parts of Puerto Rico; having employees who were telework ready made it possible for continuation of service during office closures.”

Telework is particularly important in the Washington, D.C. area as it's central to OPM's Washington, D.C. Dismissal and Closure Procedures.

### **2. Better performance**

Because telework allows operations to continue without disruption and reduces normal office distractions, most agencies identified telework as a tool to increase productivity. They viewed telework as part of a broader effort to be an employer of choice or to meet agency performance goals by creating conditions most conducive to productivity, such as allowing employees to adapt work conditions to meet their needs and work preferences. The metrics reported included employee performance ratings, data from the employee satisfaction and work-life surveys, and time and attendance records.

OPM highlighted the Department of State on this issue.

“The department has made tremendous progress in promoting telework as a part of our workplace flexibility options to improve and enhance employee performance. As an employee morale tool and as reflected in the 2017 Federal Work/life survey, our employees favorably responded in this area to confirm our assessment and values. In inclement weather, situational telework allows employees to have impact and remain productive. Core telework arrangements allow managers and employees to communicate regularly and maximize the use of telework to

focus on specific projects, deadlines and issue, often without normal office distractions, which leads to productivity gains.

Among federal employees who telework, 72% said telework improved their performance.

64% said they telework because it helps maximize their productivity.

### **3. Healthier workers**

Telework reduces stress and burnout because employees have a better work-life balance. Employees, for example, can spend more time with their family instead of having to commute long distances and to be stuck in traffic.

Indeed, agencies used telework to improve employees' health and reduce use of sick leave. An employee work-life survey showed that telework helped 77% of teleworkers better manage their stress while improving the health of 68% of teleworkers.

### **4. Lower turnover**

Recruiting and training new employees takes time and is expensive. In some expensive areas like the San Francisco Bay Area, telework allows employees to live in a less expensive neighborhood that's farther away from the office when they otherwise would have had to change jobs and leave the agency. This allows agencies to retain talent and employees to reduce expenses associated with turnover. According to the OPM report, 75% of teleworkers said telework increased their desire to stay at their agency.

OPM also listed telework as a good recruitment tool, saying "Telework can be a valuable non-monetary incentive for attracting prospective employees to federal service, and research shows that many employees view flexibility as a form of compensation."

### **5. Lower costs**

Many agencies save money on office space, energy use, and related purchases by having employees telework.

- The General Services Administration, for example, saved \$24.6 million on office space and \$6 million on energy costs.
- The Department of Education saved \$6.2 million on office space.
- The Department of Homeland Security saved \$6.7 million on real estate.
- The Department of Justice saved \$3.1 million on office space.
- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau saved \$278,000 in transit subsidy costs.
- The Agency for International Development saved half a million dollars on office space, IT systems, and transit benefits.

Telework also reduces employee absenteeism and lost productivity. Agencies also save money and time on hiring and training as telework reduces turnover.

## **6. Cleaner environment**

Telework helps agencies conserve energy and reduces the number of vehicles on the roads, hence less traffic, gas consumption, and pollution.

Teleworkers at the Patent and Trademark Office, for example, have a big impact on the environment in the Washington, D.C. area, collectively saving \$7.3 million in gas a year and avoid driving 93 million miles a year. The Commute Miles Goal Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency teleworkers avoid driving 878,000 miles a year.

## **Telework works!**

Next time your agency is trying to get rid of telework, show them the OPM's report and ask them why they are rejecting all these benefits.