TeleTeam

"Make Telework Work"
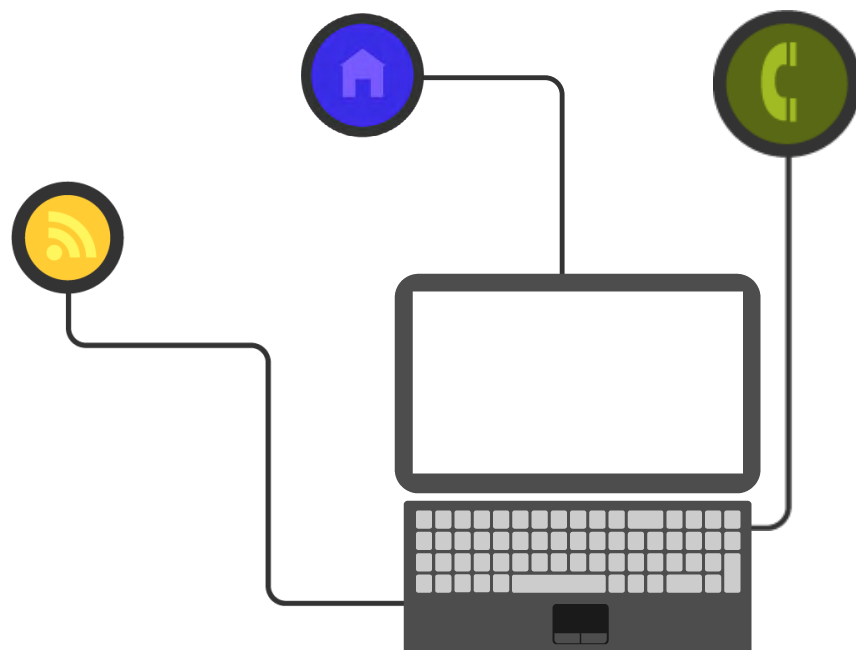
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"We have been busy reimagining our workplace and how we can best support employees across the Natural Resources Agency. As we return from the pandemic, our vision is to provide more flexibility for employees, innovate and improve the ways we collaborate, and help us all thrive both in the workplace and in our lives."
–Secretary Wade Crowfoot, CNRA

INNOVATION PRIORITY

Equip decision-makers at all levels of state government with actionable best practices and helpful tools to cultivate an agile and adaptable remote workforce.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic detonated worldwide in early 2020 and forced the California state government to hastily adopt remote work operations (telework). Almost literally overnight State government leaders had to overhaul on the fly long-standing work policies and procedures, moving the majority of all work from primarily on-site operations to remote locations. This unplanned transformation resulted in a patchwork of inconsistent and often confusing telework approaches across State government operations. This rapid transition stirred conflicts within the State's workforce and interfered with effective delivery of state services.

Telework, a work arrangement that allows employees to perform work remotely from facility-based operations, is not new. Numerous service providers in the private sector as well as the U.S. Government have spent years pursuing the benefits of telework:

- Enhanced work-life balance for employees
- Improved recruitment and retention of the best and brightest workforce
- Increased capacity to achieve missions and operational goals
- Better handling of disruptions in the workplace due to wide-impact emergencies
- Reduced overhead costs and maximized productivity
- Improved timely delivery of services to the public

California's overnight telework transformation of government services underscored the need for cultivating an agile and adaptable work culture that embraces innovation. The easing of COVID-19 restrictions in mid-2021 is injecting renewed uncertainty about the state's workforce policies and threatens to undermine the productivity gains achieved through telework.

TeleTeam proposes development of **Tele-Portal,** a web-based conceptual model designed to promote informed, consistent, and inclusive telework decisions by all levels of State agency leadership and by rank-and-file workers. **Tele-Portal** features eight "pillars" supporting informed telework decisions.

TELE-PORTAL
PILLARS

Data &
Statistics

Telework
Toolbox

Best
Practices

JQ Telework
Tour Guide

Bulletin
Board

Survey/
Research

Human
Resources

DEI
Resources

TELE-PORTAL
PILLARS

| Data & Statistics | Telework Toolbox | Best Practices | JQ Telework Tour Guide | Bulletin Board | Survey/ Research | Human Resources | DEI Resources |

1. Data & Statistics

   a. Telework Statistics (metrics on job performance, cost savings, workforce telework utilization)
   b. Dashboard Graphs / Tables
   c. Demographic Information
   d. Web-based public sources: telework.govops.ca.gov (State); telework.gov (Federal)

2. Telework Toolbox

   a. Business collaboration Tools (Jamboard, SLACK)
   b. Communication Tools
   c. Document Controls
   d. IT Connectivity
   e. Templates (telework agreements, survey templates)
   f. GIS Application Tool (includes SACNet Skills Bank, hoteling options, related telework resources)
   g. Artificial Intelligence Tools

3. Best Practices

   a. TED Talks
   b. Best Practices from public sector
   c. Best Practices from private sectors
   d. Best Practices academia sources
   e. Tips for maintaining a healthy workforce culture
   f. Written processes and procedures (use of checklists)

4. "J.Q. Telework" Tour Guide

   a. Remote work modeling
   b. State-specific training
   c. Ergonomics
   d. Equipment
   e. Technology
   f. "Chat" assistance

5. Bulletin Board

   a. Q&A "Chat Rooms"
   b. FAQs
   c. Telework-related Current Events
   d. Telework Bulletin Updates

6. Survey Results / Research Resources

   a. Telework Research Findings
   b. Results from Telework Surveys
   c. Focus Groups
   d. Canned Surveys for Customization and Use
   e. White Papers

7. Human Resources

   a. Training Targeted on Making Telework Work
   b. Recruiting / Hiring Onboarding resources
   c. Mental Health
   d. RA (Reasonable Accommodation)
   e. Workplace Discrimination
   f. Progressive Discipline
   g. Discussion: What comes from collective bargaining?

8. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

   a. Public and Private Sector Resources
   b. Dealing with Discrimination in Remote Work
   c. How to Ensure Employee Visibility in Remote Work
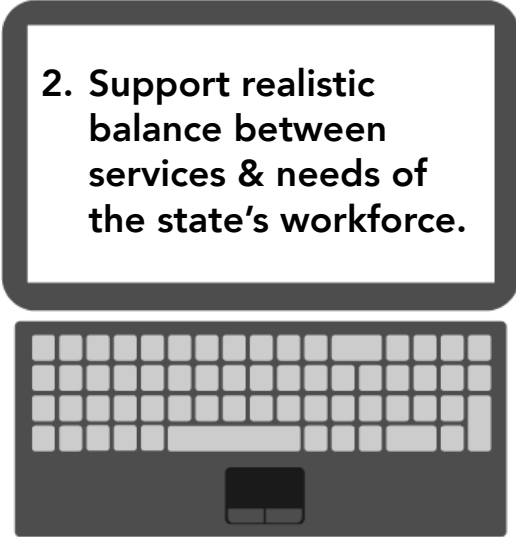   d. Home Office Ergonomics Resources
   e. Mental Health Resources

TELE-PORTAL'S
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Don't reinvent the wheel.

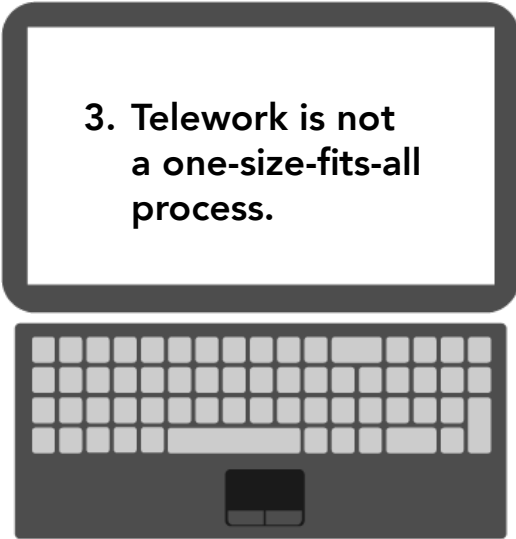Tele-Portal will tap into existing sources of detailed information on telework best practices.

- **telework.govops.ca.gov.** The California State Telework Guide provides best practices and tips to help make telework successful for every employee and the Californians they serve. The resources are tailored to the needs of five audiences:

  » **Employees**
  » **Managers**
  » **IT Administrators**
  » **Organizational Leaders**
  » **Emergency Telework**

- **telework.gov.** The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) maintains the official website of the Federal Government's telework program. The Telework Enhancement Act was signed into law in December 2010 to unleash the potential of telework as a strategic intervention for supporting agency effectiveness.

  » **Consistent requirements for telework policies**
  » **Detailed guidelines for specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations for all Federal Executive agencies**
  » **Library of telework-related training programs**

- **Private and non-profit sectors.** Telework has a long history of success stories in providing lessons learned. Consultants, for example, deliver a broad range of collaborative services with minimal reliance on physical facilities.

2. Support realistic balance between services & needs of the state's workforce.

Agencies are responsible for effective and efficient delivery of government services by the State's workforce. Customer-centric and worker-centric policies and practices should be complementary and mutually supportive.

- Outcome-based performance metrics
- Culture of continuous learning
- Open lines of communication throughout state operations

3. Telework is not a one-size-fits-all process.

Some state functions simply cannot be performed remotely, e.g., operation of the State Water Project, habitat restoration projects, and fire protection activities. As agency leaders reimagine the state's workplace, they will need to establish flexible, yet consistent standards for determining when hybrid telework practices best fit the needs of worker and the public they serve.

BACKGROUND

The Covid-19 pandemic that spread rapidly across the globe and throughout California in early 2020 required the State to issue statewide stay-at-home orders to slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus. California's economy was at significant risk of collapse as private sector businesses and government entities had to quickly rethink how to provide their usual services in a way as close to normal as possible.

All State employees whose jobs did not require their physical presence in the office or the field to perform their work duties were required to shift to remote work sites, usually at home. Due to the rapid and widespread nature of this change in work requirements, it was inevitable that there would be difficulties and impediments to accomplishing this shift. This resulted in inconsistent approaches as to how this would be implemented. Over one year later, though it has been shown that telework on a broad scale is achievable, many of these inconsistencies and complications remain.

The State's telework experience over the past year brought tangible benefits:

- Reduced commuting saved workers' travel time, conserved fossil fuels and improved air quality
- Less reliance on paper processes saved natural resources
- Telecommuting by much of the state's workforce increased flexibility to balance work/home life demands
- Increased productivity in many state functions
- Expanded employment opportunities for individuals not living near state facilities

Challenges to effective teleworking still include:

- Reluctance of some executives and/or managers to embrace some form of remote work policies
- Lack of adequate resources in the home (workspace, technology, connectivity, bandwidth) and contending with distractions (child or elder care)
- Threats to confidential information, i.e., information security issues

GOVERNMENT WORKPLACE
OF THE FUTURE

As has been stated and imagined by several current State leaders, the future of government work in the State of California will include a significant portion of public employees working remotely for a significant portion of their time. Now that it has demonstrated that this can be accomplished, telework can be implemented broadly to take advantage of its many benefits.

Currently, there is a lack of consistency in how and where telework in general has been implemented. Though much of this inconsistency is because some government work cannot simply be performed remotely, there are still greatly varied approaches to how telework is applied as well as a broad range of opinions on its value and effectiveness.

The Tele-Portal will be designed to be a resource tool for State employees seeking information and resources to support their work processes, benefits, and work-life balance, for managers and supervisors to research best telework practices to support their staff—and to ensure that productivity does not suffer—and for executives to keep current on the latest state of practice and research related to telework and their respective missions.

The idea behind Tele-Portal is that it is an opportunity to link the user to a variety of resources that will develop consistent best telework practices in their workplaces. The use of Tele-Portal resources will support their employees with their work, and their work-life balance, while ensuring that they remain able to provide the public with a consistently high level of services. The Tele-Portal will be expandable and updateable as newer policies and better technologies become available.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. Capitalize on talent accessible through the SACNet Skills Bank

A. ***FORM A TELEWORK ADVISORY BOARD***. Expertise to guide selection of content needed to support informed telework decisions, organizational change practices, technological collaboration tools, employee training and development, and quantitative and qualitative performance metrics.

B. ***FORM A PROJECT TEAM***. Expertise needed includes website design, project management, and graphic art.

2. Design a blueprint for the Tele-Portal website

STEP 1: Define use case requirements

STEP 2: Map out user flows

STEP 3: Create visuals (screens)

STEP 4: Create Code

STEP 5: Pilot Test

STEP 6: Deploy

STEP 7: Establish communication channel for customer feedback

3. Solicit a Champion to sponsor Tele-Portal

Government Operations Agency (GovOps) is a likely candidate to provide funding and a permanent operational home. GovOps' mission for California is to improve management and accountability of government programs, increase efficiency, and promote better and more coordinated operational decisions.

4. Plan and conduct a post-implementation Public Relations campaign

Upon Tele-Portal's successful launch, promote the website's resources across State agencies as well as its potential to support consistent telework decisions by State leaders and by State workers. Publicize on-going testimonial success stories from system users.

REFERENCES

Telework.govops.ca.gov Maintained initially by DGS and soon to be added to the GovOps statewide telework website.

Telework.gov Maintained by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Commerce.gov/hr/employees/work-life-balance/telework Maintained by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

The Next Great Disruption Is Hybrid Work—Are We Ready?
https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work

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