

Remote Work vs. Workplace Flexibility

Remote Work

In this policy, remote work means doing some or all of your job at a location away from campus—like your home or a nearby office.

This does **not** include:

- Workplace flexibility arrangements
- Research trips or business travel
- Sabbaticals
- Permanent off-campus work sites set up by the university (like field stations, CERN, or IceCube)

Note: If you're **assigned to** work at a university-owned or leased location (even if it's off-campus), you **are not** considered a remote worker under this policy.

Workplace Flexibility

Workplace flexibility means occasionally working off-campus without a set schedule. These arrangements are short-term or sporadic and **do not** require a formal remote work agreement.

For definitions of other terms, see the UW–Madison Remote Work Policy.

Headquarters Location

The headquarters location is the official location where the work of an employee's position is performed on a permanent basis. This is typically the campus or institution office. The headquarters location is determined by the needs of the university and is assigned at the time of hire or upon entering into a flexible work arrangement. An employee is only eligible for travel reimbursement to the position's office or work location if their headquarters location is assigned as their alternate work location - refer to the Remote Work Policy for additional information.

Requesting, Evaluating, and Approving Flexible Work Arrangements

At UW–Madison, remote work is a collaborative decision based on the needs of the employee's role, the department or unit, and the university.

Either the employee or the supervisor can suggest remote work as a possible option.

Each remote work request is reviewed individually, based on the following factors:

- **Job duties** – Some jobs require being on-site to be done effectively.
- **Team operations** – For example, trainees may need in-person support, or in-person communication may be faster.
- **Cost savings** – Potential savings for the university, school/college/division, or department.
- **Employee needs and preferences**
- **Employee performance**
- **Practical considerations** – Such as equipment, workspace setup, office space, and scheduling.
- **Fairness** – Making sure similar roles are treated equitably.

Each school, college, or division sets its own process for reviewing and approving remote work requests.

In Workday, final approval follows this order:

- Manager
- HR Partner (Supervisory)
- HR Executive – *only required if the remote work location is outside the State of Wisconsin*

Flexible Work Arrangement (referred to as Remote Work Agreements in policy)

No matter where an employee is working remotely, whether in Wisconsin, out of state, or internationally—they must have an approved Flexible Work Arrangement.

This single agreement applies to all remote work situations and outlines key details, including:

- A description of the off-campus work location
- Expectations for communication and staying engaged with work
- Any required equipment or services

Employee Responsibilities

Employees who work remotely are responsible for:

- Following all applicable laws, policies, and procedures, in coordination with their supervisor and other designated staff
- Managing any personal tax or benefits changes related to remote work
- Working with campus IT to ensure their technology is secure, compatible, and functioning properly

Equipment, Materials, and Supplies

- Supervisors or divisional HR decide what equipment is provided and track related costs
- Most employees will receive one computer (usually a laptop) unless their job requires more
- Employees are generally expected to pay for their own internet service, which must be strong enough to support work tasks, including video conferencing
- Employees who split time between remote and on-site work will typically not receive full workstations at both locations (e.g., one laptop used in both places)

Before remote work is approved, employees must ensure their remote workspace has:

- Privacy
- Physical and technical security
- Necessary equipment and software
- Reliable internet access

Employees should contact their supervisor or divisional HR for help if needed.

Data Privacy and Security

Each school, college, or division will ensure each remote worker has secure remote access to university systems and data by following campus-wide guidance and any specific compliance requirements set by their unit. They will confirm:

- The type of data being accessed
- The computing environment needed
- Privacy and security requirements

Employees with complex needs—such as traveling to countries with restrictions—should consult the [Office of Cybersecurity, Export Control Office](#) and the [Office of Risk Management](#) before traveling.

Denial, Modification, or Revocation of Remote Work

If a remote work request is denied, changed, or revoked, the employee may ask for a review by the vice chancellor, dean, or director of their school, college, or division. That decision is final and cannot be appealed.

Leaders should consider fairness and equity when making these decisions.

Out-of-State Remote Work

The university reserves the right to determine in advance whether an employee can work primarily from outside Wisconsin. This decision is based on:

- The university's operational needs
- Whether the employee can meet performance expectations remotely

Each school, college, or division sets its own process for reviewing and approving out-of-state remote work requests.

In Workday, final approval follows this order:

- Manager
- HR Partner (Supervisory)
- HR Executive – Required for remote work location outside the State of Wisconsin

International Remote Work

International remote work is only allowed when there is a documented and approved business necessity, meaning the arrangement supports the university's mission and is **not just for the employee's personal benefit**.

Before approval, the school/college/division must work with the appropriate campus offices (such as the [Office of Cybersecurity, Export Control Office](#) and the [Office of Risk Management](#)) and the employee to address any legal and risk-related issues.