



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

September 19, 2023

Memorandum

To: Human Capital Officers
Human Resource Directors
Human Resource Officers

From: Jennifer A. Ackerman
Director, Office of Human Capital
Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer

Subject: Departmental Remote Work Policy Update

Background

The public health emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic ended with the President's declaration on April 10, 2023, codified in Public Law 118-3. Shortly thereafter, on April 13, 2023, the Office of Management and Budget issued [M-23-15, Measuring, Monitoring, and Improving Organizational Health and Organizational Performance in the Context of Evolving Agency Work Environment](#). In response to this directive, the Department of the Interior (Interior or Department) began taking steps to execute M-23-15 by implementing changes to the application of the Departmental Remote Work Policy, [Personnel Bulletin \(PB\) 20-06](#). The changes outlined in this memorandum became effective on July 27, 2023. All other provisions of [PB 20-06](#) currently remain unchanged.

Employee-Initiated Remote Work Requests

Final Approval Authority Effective July 27, 2023, the approval procedures for all employee-initiated requests for remote work and annual recertifications rest at the Assistant Secretary level and may not be further delegated.

- Employee-initiated remote work arrangements may be subject to collective bargaining. Bureaus/Offices are reminded to fulfill their labor-management obligations, as appropriate, in implementing the requirements set forth in this memorandum.
- Domestic Employees Teleworking Overseas (DETO) agreement procedures remain unchanged but must be elevated to the Assistant Secretary for approval following Office of the Chief Information Officer approval.
- Remote work approvals resulting from reasonable accommodation should be approved consistent with [PB 21-03](#) procedures and should not be included in remote work percentages as of July 27, 2023.

Considerations for Filling Positions Designated as Remote

Positions hired as remote are not covered by [PB 20-06](#) but may have cost implications (e.g., change in locality pay, travel expenses, etc.) for Bureaus/Offices. Bureaus/ Offices should assess all benefits and costs before approving remote work arrangements. Given budget implications and equity considerations, Bureau/Office remote work policies should clearly outline the level of approval required to institute or execute a remote work agreement or position. **Filling remote positions do not require Assistant Secretary approval as long as bureaus stay within their current level/percentage as of July 27, 2023.**

Bureau/Office Data Monitoring and Reporting

Bureaus/Offices must maintain the percentage of all remote workers at or below their current percentages as recorded on July 27, 2023, **inclusive of employee requested and remote hiring** actions except for reasonable accommodation requests, including pre-approved, and any remote employees hired through vacancy announcements. By the end of each quarter's first full pay period, beginning October 8, 2023, Bureaus/Offices must submit a consolidated report of all employees on remote agreements to OHC at doi_office_of_human_resources@ios.doi.gov. Bureaus/Offices will continue to evaluate organizational health and performance to determine if future changes are required.

Additionally, in accordance with [PB-20-06](#), all remote work agreements must be reviewed on an annual basis by the employee and supervisor to determine whether the arrangement is still in the best interest of the agency. Annual certifications should be consolidated and sent to the Bureau/Office for Assistant Secretary review and certification as appropriate. Subsequent annual certifications should be submitted to the Bureau/Office for Assistant Secretary review and certification annually thereafter.

Bureaus/Offices should seek to balance utilizing remote work arrangements to meet strategic hiring needs while maintaining their level/percentages of remote workers and should introduce internal interim procedures supportive of both objectives. It is noted a more comprehensive remote work policy is forthcoming that may require changes to Bureau/Office implementation plans. Positions previously approved to be advertised as remote before July 27, 2023, may continue to be filled as remote and included in the Bureaus/Offices' overall remote worker levels/percentages.

For the most up-to-date FAQs, please find them on [Planned changes to Interior's Telework and Remote Work Posture \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Attachment 1 - Sample Bureau/Office Remote Work Procedures

Attachment 2 – Annual Certification Remote Work Reporting Template

Attachment 1 (Notional Process-Bureaus/Offices are encouraged to adjust to their specific needs) *Example*

This process applies to **employee-initiated remote** work requests for:

- New requests
 - Currently approved requests that are requesting a change in duty station
 - Annual renewals
1. Offices will use their current request/renewal process and forms to obtain office level approvals.
 2. Once a request/renewal is internally approved:
 - a. Information required for Assistant Secretary will be entered into a shared spreadsheet by the Supervisor (see Attachment 2) with support by the Servicing Human Resource Office (SHRO)
 - b. The Supervisor will fill out all applicable information working with their SHRO office. If approved, the Supervisor will initial/date the appropriate cell. If not approved the Supervisor will remove the employee from the spreadsheet and contact the employee via email denying the request/renewal and provide a rationale.

Example* Attachment 2 – Annual Certification Remote Work Reporting Template (Bureaus/Offices are encouraged to adjust to their specific needs) *Example

Instructions: (1) **Beginning xxxx, 2023**, Bureaus/Offices must submit a consolidated report of all employees requiring remote agreement certifications as of July 27, 2023 as well as remote hiring positions, and submit to the Bureau/Office Assistant Secretary's for approval. (2) Subsequent annual certifications should be submitted to the Bureau/Office Assistant Secretary level for approval annually thereafter, or until otherwise changed by policy and/or directive.

Fiscal Year: **Submission Date:**

Bureau/Office Name:

Servicing Human Resources Office Name:

Name of Submitting Official:

Role of Submitting Official:

Name of Employee (Last, First, MI)	Name of Supervisor (Last, First, MI)	Employee Occupation Series/Position (XXXX)	Approval for (New Request, Change of Duty Station, Remote Hire or Yearly Certification)	Last Effective Date of Remote Work Agreement certification/ yearly certification (Month, Day, Year)	Remote Work Duty location (City, County, State)	Is this position cost neutral or cost saving and in the best interest of DOI (Y or N), if not provide explanation	Within Office Cap % Validated? (Yes/No)	Recommended approval from Supervisor (Yes/No)	Recommended approval from Bureau Head (Yes/No)	Is this position cost neutral or cost saving and in the best interest of DOI (Y or N), if not provide explanation	Does the position require special or unique competencies?	Does the employee have a performance rating of Fully Successful or higher and have had no official disciplinary action taken against them in the last two years?	Recommend approval from DAS/Bureau Head (Yes/No) Final Approval from Asst Secretary (Yes/No) *

**after approving an employee's location or relocation to a remote worksite, the agency later directs the employee's move to another official worksite outside of the employee's commuting area (e.g., return to a Department of the Interior - approved worksite) for reasons unrelated to poor performance or misconduct, the agency may be required to cover applicable expenses such as moving expenses if the employee accepts the directed reassignment.*