



Employer Telework Case Study

Employer

United States Department of
Agriculture

Animal Health and Plant
Inspection Service (APHIS)
Beltsville, Maryland

Contact

Mika J. Cross, Work/Life and
Wellness Program Manager
(202)603-5540

mika.cross@dm.usda.gov

Tara Green, HR Specialist
(301)734-3819

tara.1.green@aphis.usda.gov

Background

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is a multifaceted agency with a broad mission area that includes protecting and promoting U.S. agricultural health, regulating genetically engineered organisms, administering the Animal

Welfare Act and carrying out wildlife damage management activities. These efforts support the overall mission of the USDA, which is to protect and promote food, agriculture, natural resources and related issues.

The Telework Experience

APHIS has had a telework program in place for 21 years with the telework program pilot beginning in 1990. In 2005 APHIS implemented an automated application system to keep better track of all telework participants/agreements and to reduce the need to print and file hard copy agreements. Employees are eligible to participate in telework and have flexible schedules. All employees who participate in telework, as well as managers who approve telework, are required to undergo telework training. As of June 2011, the policy of the APHIS Telework Program assumes that all employees and positions are eligible for telework, unless official duties require an employee to be physically present at a worksite on a daily basis and work cannot be performed remotely or from an alternative worksite. This is consistent with the current USDA Telework Policy.

Challenges and Investment

During the process of rolling out the new telework initiative, we encountered several challenges:

- Determining the final language of the telework policy: Once a new policy is drafted, it has to be vetted through the appropriate personnel for commentary. These comments are either incorporated into the draft, or an explanation has to be given to the originator of the comment as to why the suggestions were not included. The originator then has to concur with the reasoning. We received and processed many comments.
- Obtaining buy-in from management and employees and addressing misperceptions about the program.
- Identifying work positions that are ineligible for telework.

Program Outlook

The overall outlook for the MRP Telework Program is positive. IT continues to explore other solutions for making the telework connectivity process easier, and we are actively initiating and increasing participation in telework.

Most Helpful Resources

The program has received support from upper level management and an internal telework team that included all 10 APHIS programs, IT, Operations/Staffing, and representatives from each agency in the Marketing and Regulatory Programs, (MRP), mission area. It has also been helpful to have had the automated telework application system (Teleworks!) in place

since 2005. Distance Management (managing for results) resources for supervisors have also been a key component in securing managerial confidence in the program.

Success Tips

- Involve upper level management/executive team from the beginning to ensure support.
- Involve the various programs in the rewriting of the policy, thereby increasing buy-in from managers and employees.
- Keep Unions apprised of policy status and eligibility notification.

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