



Draft

Flexible Workplace Program

Guidelines

Transparency & Communication | Equity & Inclusion | Accountability
Service & Outcomes Excellence | Our People Matter



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Purpose and Scope

I. Purpose*

The Flexible Workplace Program guidelines provide for a workplace option that strengthens Guilford County's commitment to its vision and values. By offering a flexible workplace option, Guilford County is committed to a strong employee engagement culture that supports a healthy work-life balance resulting in a productive workplace environment. This program allows departments to designate eligible employees based on their position description to work at alternate work locations for all or part of the work week. As a public employer, the County has an obligation to ensure that employees and work resources are being utilized efficiently and productively.

In support of our county value that "Our People Matter," Guilford County implemented the Flexible Workplace Program guidelines. These guidelines provide for alternate work locations defined as fully remote, hybrid or mobile options for eligible employees. Eligible employees can voluntarily participate ("opt-in") in the program subject to the terms and conditions provided for in the guidelines. The guidelines are subject to regular review by County Administration and subject to change with limited notice to participating employees.

The goals of Guilford County's Flexible Workplace Program are:

- To increase employee engagement/satisfaction and reduce turnover.
- To attract new employees and remain competitive in the labor market.
- To provide consistent county-wide guidelines for departments to follow when administering the program.
- To provide a fair and equitable process for establishing flexible workplace agreements with employees.

The County reserves the right to designate positions as full-time remote or hybrid based on organizational need and effectively manage available office space. The guidelines do not create employee entitlement, nor do they establish a contract. A participating employee is expected to perform their full scope of assigned job duties and responsibilities while participating in the program.

II. Scope

The Flexible Workplace Program is available to eligible employees who occupy positions that have been determined eligible for flexible workplace site designation based on the duties and responsibilities required in the position description. Employee participation in the program is documented by completing the Flexible Workplace Program Agreement form and submitting it for supervisory approval. A copy of the signed agreement is maintained in the employees' personnel record in the Human Resources Department.

The County acknowledges that there are positions that require an employee to be fully present at their primary county location to deliver services to customers and community members. Therefore, they are ineligible to participate in the program. The County is not obligated to provide any off-setting arrangements for employees assigned full-time to a primary county location. Positions that require employees to be fully present will be documented in the position description. However, a flexible work

Eligible Employees and Definitions

schedule option may be offered at the Department Director's discretion with Human Resources approval.

III. Eligible Employees*

All full-time and part-time employees, introductory and grant funded employees may participate in the program if their position description is designated eligible for a flexible workplace site location.

IV. Definitions*

Position description: A statement that describes the primary purpose of the position including the duties and responsibilities (including essential functions), knowledge skills and abilities, the minimum educational and experience required to perform the work including eligibility for a flexible workplace site designation.

Core Business Hours: The period during which an employee must be present at their designated worksite to engage in work. The standard core business hours for Guilford County are 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. The standard work week is 40 hours.

Primary County Office Site: The employee's designated place of work at a Guilford County location.

Flex Space: Workspace at a county facility that is shared with other employees who are on approved flexible workplace agreements.

Primary Flexible Workplace Site: An approved alternate work site where an employee can perform the full scope of their duties and responsibilities either fully remote from their primary worksite or hybrid (part of the workweek). For the purposes of these guidelines, it is generally expected that the primary flexible workplace site is the employee's primary home residence.

Occasional Flexible workplace site: When an employee works at a flexible workplace site for no more than one week at a time with prior supervisory approval.

Flexible Workplace Agreement: A signed agreement that allows an employee to work at an alternate work site either fully remote or hybrid other than their primary worksite (excludes mobile workers).

Mobile Worker: An employee who primarily performs their daily job duties in the community.

Employee Engagement: The level of an employee's commitment and connection to an organization.

Department Responsibilities

V. Department Responsibilities:

a. Designation of Position

Departments are responsible for designating positions that are eligible for a primary flexible workplace site on the position description and filed with Human Resources. Departments should consider the following criteria in making the determination:

- Customer service levels can be maintained from the flexible workplace site.
- Serves to increase employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention.
- Federal, State, and Local data/privacy laws are not violated.
- Departmental operations and service delivery are maintained or enhanced.
- Staff availability to internal and external customers is maintained or enhanced.
- Employee productivity maintained or enhanced.
- Position costs are neutral (i.e., no additional positions needed and no increase in overtime or comp time).
- Other County departments, services, or staff are not adversely impacted.
- Recruitment and retention of qualified, productive, and engaged staff is enhanced.

b. Determining Employee Eligibility

The decision to allow an eligible employee to participate in the program will be made by the department director or their designee upon recommendation of their supervisor. The following factors will be considered:

- Overall job performance as documented in performance reviews.
- Has demonstrated technical proficiency to work remotely.
- An acceptable flexible workplace site that ensures confidentiality of work.
- An acceptable flexible workplace site that is free from undue distractions.
- The employees' flexible workplace site has sufficient internet bandwidth to support the work with minimal disruption.
- Disciplinary record from the prior year.
- Must be able to access the necessary programs, software, and technology to complete their job duties.

Employees that are approved to participate in the program must meet the same performance standards, professionalism and personal appearance standards expected of all County employees.

c. Performance

Departments are responsible for ensuring that employees approved to participate in the program meet the same performance standards and professionalism expected of all employees performing similar work.

Department Responsibilities

The employees with approved flexible workplace agreements will be expected to perform all job responsibilities as stipulated in the signed agreement.

The supervisor is responsible for scheduling regular occurring meetings with employees to monitor work progress, issue assignments, and receive feedback from employees. As with all employees, the supervisor shall formulate objectives, expectations, and procedures for evaluating work productivity for employees working at a flexible workplace site.

d. Work Schedules & Attendance

The department is responsible for ensuring the employees with an agreement comply with all county personnel regulations covering work schedules, use of leave benefits, and attendance. Flexible worksite agreements will stipulate the employee's standard work hours/schedule.

If an employee who is working at a flexible workplace site is unable to complete their workday, they are expected to immediately notify their supervisor and make the necessary adjustments to their timecard.

If County offices are delayed or closed due to inclement weather, holiday or any other reason, employees should adhere to relevant Guilford County policies or other standards (e.g., Inclement Weather policy) or seek guidance from their supervisor if they are unsure of how to record their time.

Employees with an agreement are approved to work at a remote location on the days and hours established by their department leadership. With prior supervisory approval, an employee may work at another flexible workplace site not to exceed one week.

e. Flexible workplace site- Employee Workspace

County departments shall not provide any furniture, utilities, or internet access for an employee's flexible workplace site. Any request for an exception to this provision must submit a request in writing to the County Manager.

Employees are solely responsible for expenses related to furniture, utilities, maintenance, or internet access for their flexible workplace site.

Employees are prohibited from meeting with customers or community members or other employees at their flexible workplace site. If an employee must meet with a customer or community member, they will commute to a county facility.

f. Primary County Worksite- County Workspace

Departments will provide flex space at a county location and make it available to employees with flexible workplace agreements. Employees with hybrid agreements are not guaranteed individually assigned offices or cubicles. Employees with fully remote agreements will not be assigned to a specific office or workspace.

Department Responsibilities

Once an employee signs their Flexible Workplace Program Agreement they will be expected to de-personalize their primary county assigned office or cubicle.

g. Communication

The supervisor and employee should establish a plan that details the required frequency and types of communication with internal and external customers. This should include expectations related to work schedules and locations, voicemail messages, meeting attendance, video calls, and telephone contact. Supervisors and Managers should be available to engage in regular, predictable, and supportive communication with their team regardless of the employee's location. Employees are expected to be responsive during designated work hours and keep their Guilford County electronic calendars up to date.

h. Supplies Technology & Equipment

Department Directors or their designee are responsible for determining the necessary information technology equipment and software needed to perform the job duties of a position. Department Directors (or designee) shall consult with Information Technology (IT) and Budget in making these determinations. The purchase of new equipment or supplies is contingent upon the department's available budget and should be consistent with equipment provided to similar positions regardless of worksite location.

Employees working at a flexible workplace site should coordinate the acquisition of necessary office supplies on the days that they are scheduled to work at their primary office location.

1. **Technology:** Guilford County will provide the necessary technology for all County employees as determined by their required job duties. Employees designated in one of the flexible workplace arrangement types listed in section 3.2 will be provided with one (1) computer, and necessary equipment as determined by Guilford County. Only County-authorized equipment and software should be used for County business. Employees working offsite will be responsible for the transportation and installation of County-owned equipment, as well as scheduling service or repairs at a Guilford County location as needed. Guilford County IT will perform virtual support to flexible workspaces unless onsite support is required as determined by IT.
2. **Equipment:** If an employee ends their employment with Guilford County, they are required to return all County-owned technology, equipment, and supplies within (three) 3 business days of their last working day. Failure to return equipment will result in action including deducting the cost of the equipment from the employee's last paycheck in accordance with N.C. Gen. Stat. 95-25.8, and the County reserves the right to take action through any legal means for recovery of or compensation for such items. All equipment must be in the same or similar condition as it was received.

HR Responsibilities & Conditions of Employment

VI. Human Resources Responsibilities*

The County Manager delegates to Human Resources the responsibility to administer and provide oversight of the Flexible Workplace Program guidelines. Human Resources will provide coordination with departments on the implementation and maintenance of the program. Human Resources will develop and provide training to department supervisors and employees on application and administration of this program. Human Resources will review and monitor all flexible workplace agreements to ensure compliance with program requirements. Human Resources will report at least annually to the County Manager on the performance of the program, compliance issues and make program improvement recommendations based on employee feedback.

VII. Conditions of Employment*

An employee that is approved for Guilford County's Flexible Workplace Program must comply with the terms and conditions of employment as set forth in Guilford County's Personnel Regulations and all other relevant guidelines. Employee work hours, overtime, compensation, and leave will continue to conform to existing County policies and procedures and should not be altered due to participation in the program. Work hours outside of the County's normal business hours are at the discretion of the Department Director and based on the function of the position. Departments are encouraged to clearly establish specific days of the week and hours when employees are expected to work onsite versus at an approved remote workspace and document in a flexible workplace agreement between the employee and the organization.

When in-person meetings require the employee's physical presence, the department and employee should make every attempt to schedule onsite workdays to coincide with onsite meetings as much as possible to minimize disruption to the workday.

Employees with flexible workplace agreements are in an official duty status during their designated work schedule and must be careful to minimize interruptions to avoid disruptions in accomplishing their work. They are required to be available by phone during scheduled work hours, except for during the lunch period. Employees may flex¹ their workday so long as they work their required hours and avoid any undue disruption to co-workers or community members.

¹ As used herein, "flex" is defined as a system of allowing an employee to work a set number of hours within starting and finishing times chosen by and agreed upon by employer and employee.

Flexible Workplace Agreement

VIII. Flexible Workplace Agreement Options

There are three (3) types of flexible workplace options available: Hybrid, Mobile, and Full-Time Remote:

1. **Hybrid:** Employee works at a flexible workplace site for two (2) or more days per week. Employees that work at a flexible workplace site for three (3) or more days per week will be provided a flex space when reporting to the Primary Worksite location.
2. **Mobile Work:** Employee's responsibilities require them to be away from their Primary Worksite for much or all the regular workday due to community interaction, working "in the field," home visits, or other job requirements outside of a county worksite location. A mobile worker will be assigned to a Primary Worksite location and a flex space provided when reporting to the Primary Worksite.
3. **Full-Time Remote:** Employee works primarily at their flexible workplace site and occasionally are required to report to their primary County office worksite. Full-time remote is not guaranteed and could change based on County operational needs.

An employee with a flexible workplace agreement may be required to attend onsite, in-person meetings, functions, training, or appointments as requested or required by the department to meet the business needs of Guilford County.

IX. Flexible Workplace Program Agreements*

An eligible employee who wants to participate in the Flexible Workplace Program must first complete the Human Resources online Flexible Workplace Program training.

After completing the training, an eligible employee must submit a completed Flexible Workplace Program Agreement that includes details of the proposed option with a start date to their supervisor.

Prior to reviewing the agreement, the supervisor must complete the Human Resources online Flexible Workplace Program for Supervisors training.

After completing the training, the supervisor must review the agreement and, by their signature, recommend approval to the department director or their designee. The department director or designee will review and sign the agreement.

A copy of the signed agreement is returned to the eligible employee via the online submission portal, a copy is retained by the department and a copy is submitted to the Human Resources Department. A response to the employee's request must be provided within 15 calendar days of receipt of the request.

If the supervisor recommends denial, they must forward the employee's agreement to their department director or their designee stating in writing why they recommend denial. The director or designee has an additional five (5) days to respond to the request and inform the employee of

Flexible Workplace Agreement

their decision. A copy of the department director's written decision to deny an employee request for an agreement is sent to the Employee Relations Team in the Human Resources Department.

The decision of the department director or designee to deny an employee's request for an agreement is not appealable unless the employee believes their denial was based on unlawful discrimination.

The Flexible Workplace Agreement must be reviewed by Department leadership at least annually to ensure that the agreement continues to be mutually beneficial to the employee and Guilford County.

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Travel & Confidentiality

X. Travel

Full-time remote and mobile employees will use their primary residence address as their primary flexible workplace site for the purpose of travel reimbursement. When employees commute to and from their flexible workplace site to their primary County office worksite for work-related activities, they are not eligible for travel reimbursement. Please refer to the **Guilford County Travel and Transportation** policies for additional guidance.

XI. Confidentiality

Security of confidential information concerning the property, government, or affairs of the County is imperative to ensuring efficient operations. The privacy and security of certain confidential and sensitive information is also mandated by State and Federal laws. Employees in applicable programs and/or positions are required to maintain compliance with those laws and program requirements while working at a flexible workplace site. Like all County employees, they are also expected to adhere to all countywide and departmental policies and procedures regarding information security and confidentiality and to report any suspected unauthorized disclosure or loss of information immediately. Employees must take responsibility to ensure security of all County data, equipment, and information in both electronic and paper form that is accessed as part of their job duties to minimize risk of improper disclosure or data breach.

Agreement Modification & Non-compliance

XII. Termination or Modification of Flexible Workplace Program Agreements*

Guilford County or the employee may terminate a Flexible Workplace Agreement for any reason by providing a 30-day notice. The Department Director or designee shall be responsible for providing the employee with a Primary County Office Site workspace.

XIII. Non-Compliance

Employees violating the terms and conditions of these guidelines may have their Flexible Workplace Agreement revoked with no advance notice and reassigned to a primary worksite with no right of appeal or grievance.

Employees who willfully misuse or are unaccountable during expected business hours will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

XIV. Audit

All policies for Guilford County may be subject to audit or review as outlined in the Internal Auditor's Statement.

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Guideline Version & Approval History

XV. Version & Approval History

Guideline Origination Date:	
Original County Manager Approval Date:	
Current Version Approval Date:	
Current Version Number:	

Version Number	Version Notes
1.0	Original draft with EPC, Department Director, & County Attorney review.
1.1	Modified to match OSHR document flow.
1.2	Re-wrote for consistent terminology, re-ordered flow and minimized redundancies.
1.3	Updated language to include department director's designee.

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