

Remote & Flexible Work

Working from home (WFH), from a remote location or a satellite office is often referred to as telecommuting, telework or flexible work. Home-based arrangements are often the most cost-effective and convenient to implement on a full-time, part-time or temporary basis and yield the greatest returns when it comes to commuting impacts. Organizations should think of remote work as a commute mode as you're helping to directly reduce the impacts of drive-alone rates. Plus, you afford your employees flexibility, time to pause and let the earth take a big deep breath.



TravelSmart is a program focused on empowering better travel choices. We provide access to a wide range of tools and resources – from cycling programs and parking management strategies, to strategic mobility partnerships – all with the goal of helping Metro Vancouver businesses and individuals be more... TravelSmart.

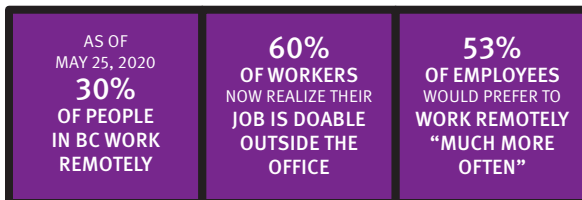
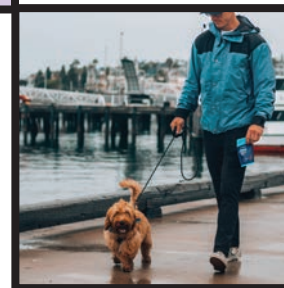
Remote is trending!

Studies show organizations are placing much greater emphasis on funding organizational changes related to transportation for their employees. Locally, many BC residents shifted overnight to an extreme version of teleworking with 30% of residents working remotely in May 2020, up from just 7% less than three months earlier. Both employers and employees have come to understand that many more people can function just as well, if not better, with a 15-second commute from their bedroom, kitchen or couch to their home workspace.

Given the recent health concerns, the pace of technological advances, and the operational efficiencies that are rapidly redefining workplace culture and the relationship between home and work, now is the time to prioritize your organization's remote work program. Not only is it simply smart business, it's a necessary step in remaining competitive. It's important to note that remote work should not be viewed by organizations as an employee benefit or a perk; it's an integral workplace strategy that has the potential to impact the productivity and well-being of your employees as well as a host of other environmental and financial factors.



+ A 2020 **TransitScreen** poll showed that 58% of businesses would invest in remote work policies. A further 80% of non-remote workers said they would be interested in working remotely if their employer offered a formal program. +



BENEFITS OF REMOTE WORK

Remote work can provide organizations, employees and the community with significant benefits including recruitment and retention, improved wellness and productivity.

Even before the significant workplace culture shifts in 2020, remote work was increasingly becoming an accepted practice in Canada and across the globe. A global flex work study in 2019 showed 77% of Canadian firms thought flex work was the new norm. Further, 68% of Canadian firms already had a flex work policy in 2019 for a variety of motivations:

- Recruitment and retention (84%)
- Reduce commuting (79%)
- Increase diversity in the workplace (84%)
- Competitiveness and efficiency (74%)

As an employer, you may be able to cut back on office and parking costs, becoming more flexible and resilient as a result. One US study estimated companies saved \$11,000 US (\$14,370 CAD) for each employee remote working half the year due to increased productivity, decreased absenteeism and lower overhead costs.

Your employees will thank you!

- Reduce commute time, costs and stress.
- Better balance home and work life.
- Maintain better health with more time for exercise.
- Increase productivity.
- Increase job satisfaction. Employees will feel valued and be more likely to remain with the company.

+ Did You Know? One survey found 76% of respondents were less likely to leave their employer with the ability to remote work. +



Remote Work Employer Checklist:

As you evaluate your organization's remote work opportunities, consider these tips in developing a successful strategy:

- Ask your employees what they think. Conduct a survey to understand how your staff are currently experiencing remote work as well as what their individual requirements and preferences are.
- If you want to start developing a program, engage all of the relevant parties including human resources, IT, senior management, any unions and legal department, where necessary. For organizations without HR personnel consider assigning another suitable employee as your remote work coordinator.
- Conduct an assessment of jobs to determine which positions are suitable for remote work. Consider things like job function, need for face-to-face contact or technology requirements. For long-term viability, you will need to ensure your employees have all necessary equipment including computer access and communications and conferencing tools.
- Set clear parameters including employee expenses (e.g. phone access, laptop, internet) as well as set working hours. Ensure you clarify roles and responsibilities. Establish approval processes for managers and communicate consistent guidance for all employees.

✦ Pro Tip: For large organizations, consider providing **satellite work hubs** for your employees. Satellite or flex work hubs are smaller, more accessible 'drop in centres' located closer to your employees' residences. For example, a Port Moody-based business could provide flex work hubs (e.g. a co-working space or sharing office space with another organization) on the North Shore, Vancouver and Burnaby, providing employees living closer to those locations with more flexibility and in-person contact. ✦

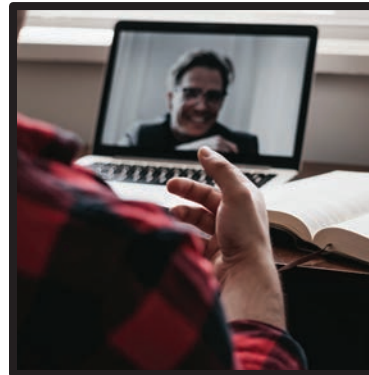


WHAT DOES A REMOTE WORK POLICY LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

Remote work: The most common option is allowing your employees to work 1, 2, 3, 4 days or full-time from home. Consider job functions and personal preferences to determine what option works best for your organization and employees.

Flexible working hours: This option allows your employees to work during non-peak hours by adjusting their start and end times. Shift and stagger where possible your employees' start and end times to non-peak hours, before 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. or end the day after 6:30 p.m. You could also consider shifting the start of the work week to Tuesday to Saturday or Wednesday to Sunday. Offering flexible working hours is a great option for employers who still require a large percentage of their employees onsite or who have relatively low access to transit services. Where transit service is low, consider matching start times to align with nearby transit schedules to improve travel options for your staff.

Compressed work week: Give your employees the three-day weekend they deserve! With this option your employees work the same hours in the week but longer hours each day (e.g. Monday–Thursday, 10 hours instead of 8 per day).



✦ Did You Know? The average commute time in Metro Vancouver is 29 minutes each way. Working remotely would give your employees an extra hour a day to spend doing things like exercising, running errands, or spending quality time with family and friends. ✦

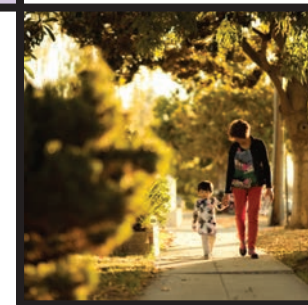
TAKING DIVERSITY INTO ACCOUNT

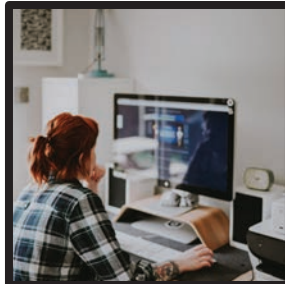
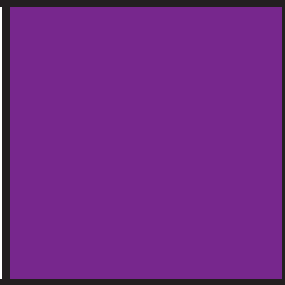
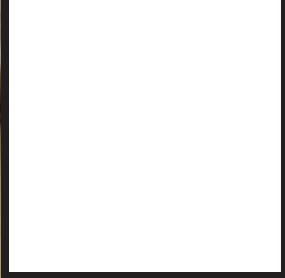
Many employees in the region have made the transition to remote work and are learning to juggle work commitments and household duties while adapting to the requirements of their job without the support structures they are more accustomed to. Consider what type of remote work agreements work for your employees' individual circumstances:

- When conducting your employee survey you may find the benefits and perceptions of remote work are experienced differently.
- Families may be juggling multiple tasks while working, including cooking, cleaning, as well as schooling and caring for children. More childcare support and flexibility may be required for senior staff and women taking on disproportionate household and childcare duties.
- While younger generations are generally more confident and resilient when transitioning to remote work, older staff may require more technical support and assistance to ensure they are comfortable working remotely.

- Consider employees who may be facing social isolation. Have managers schedule regular check-ins and meet ups with fellow staff where possible.
- Many employees face distractions at home from partners, family members, pets, and challenges such as limited workspace. Encourage and consider financially supporting your staff to set-up a separate workspace or home office where possible to maximize productivity.

+ Did You Know? With people commuting less, nearly 60% of drivers say they don't miss their commute at all. +





City of Vancouver Remote Work Guide

The City of Vancouver has developed an excellent [Remote and Flexible Work Toolkit for Employers](#), including an example employee survey, key dos and don'ts for employers and employees, as well as more information on costs and savings, guidelines and training and how to evaluate the success of your remote work program.

RESOURCES

[BC Remote and Flexible Workplaces Guide](#)

[City of Vancouver Remote and Flexible Work Toolkit](#)

[IWG Flexible Workplace Survey 2019](#)

[Metro Telework Resources](#)

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