



# The Perfect Storm:

Driving Telework in State  
and Local Agencies



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## The Telework Agenda

There is a perfect storm today driving telework in almost every major industry and government agency. High gas prices and fuel concerns, disaster recovery preparation, work/life balance demands from Generation Y, the aging workforce, and “green” initiatives are just a few matters driving telework to the forefront of today’s government operations. Telework is an efficient and effective work arrangement for employees to conduct work away from their primary workplace – on a part-time, full-time, or situational basis. This work arrangement can be done at either at their residence, a telework center, or other approved location. And agencies are reaping the benefits – boosting morale, testing continuity of operations (COOP) planning, saving real estate space and dollars, as well as enabling efforts to recruit and retain the best and brightest.

In this report, Telework Exchange explains the benefits of telework programs for state and local agencies, outlines critical telework technology, and examines robust state and local government telework programs. Telework Exchange is a public-private partnership focused on demonstrating the tangible value of government telework. We facilitate communication among teleworkers, telework managers, and IT professionals. We work closely with industry and government leaders to cross-pollinate telework best practices and facilitate more pointed conversations regarding telework.

## Telework Benefits

Over the past decade, the notion of telework has sparked increasing interest among employees and employers alike. Today, major corporations as well as the Federal government have established proven telework policies and procedures. In the Federal government, Congress mandated agencies to adopt telework to both support work/life balance and also to provide a way to alleviate traffic congestion and to reduce vehicle emissions. As a result, Congress established Public Law 106-346, which requires Federal agencies to establish

and promote telework programs for eligible employees. State and local governments, often considered behind the curve on telework, have the opportunity to adopt telework as mainstream operating practice and reap similar benefits.

Telework is a win-win-win proposition for state and local agencies, employees, and the environment alike. Telework supports:

- COOP: Business as usual
- Personnel recruitment and retention
- Real estate savings
- Work/life balance and cost savings
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions/wear and tear on public transportation

Additionally, today’s technology has finally caught up to its promises of a better tomorrow, enabling businesses and governments to effectively implement mobility and telework programs. No single technology breakthrough explains the progress. Rather, a series of step-by-step advances and steady investment in telecommunications networks, software, and computer processing have contributed to the telework growth. In particular, video conferencing technology has improved to the point where it has alleviated many questions managers previously had about teleworking. Video provides the ability to maintain face-to-face communication, eliminating management’s No. 1 telework concern – losing touch with employees.<sup>1</sup>

## Agency Benefits

*COOP: Business as Usual*

Responsible for initial response and recovery efforts in times of emergency, state and local agencies must continue to provide support to all constituents regardless of the circumstances. To do this, state and local agencies now find it imperative to incorporate telework into COOP

plans. Information Technology (IT) research firm Gartner, Inc. reports that agencies that implement teleworking as a primary work format stand the best chance to get their employees back to work as safely and quickly as possible. In addition, they are ideally positioned, via remote access, to move rapidly in the event of a disastrous interruption to operations.<sup>2</sup> Telework is not a “break glass in case of an emergency” situation, it must be implemented into agencies’ standard operating procedures to reap the benefits.

Hennepin County, headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and serving more than 1.1 million people in 46 communities, is one local agency that benefited from proper COOP planning and effective telework policy. Instead of shutting down the county government while the Republican National Convention commenced in September 2008, the county relied on its telework policy to maintain a “business as usual” workload. Implemented in 1997, Hennepin County’s telework policy avoided what could have been a drastic break in business continuity.

#### *Personnel Recruitment and Retention*

A recent study by the Center for State and Local Government Excellence reported that 54 percent of the state government workforce and 57 percent of the local government workforce are between 40 and 61 years of age – nearing retirement.<sup>3</sup> Further, the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) found the option to telework to be an increasingly important negotiating chip between organizations and younger, Generation Y employees. Respondents placed workplace flexibility at the top of their list of what attracts new workers to state government employment – second only to benefits packages.<sup>4</sup> Telework allows state and local agencies to retain knowledgeable senior workers longer while recruiting younger employees who demand greater flexibility and more work/life balance. Many state and local agencies already have robust telework programs that provide employees with more autonomy over where and when they work, without compromising product quality. This kind of flexibility is what employees are looking for today and in the future.

#### *Real Estate Savings*

Telework is also a viable solution to reduce physical office space. Estimates in the private sector indicate that telework can cut corporate real estate costs as much as 90 percent.<sup>5</sup> On the public-sector front, many Federal agencies have relinquished their office space in favor of “hoteling” programs that reserve workspace for employees who come into the office. According to Gartner, while the actual reduction in office space depends on how employees use the space, the rental cost for the floor area required, and the slight increase in shared office space for teleworkers when they are in the office, the average reduction is still roughly 130 to 140 square feet per remote user per year.<sup>6</sup> The result is significantly reduced real estate space maintenance and cost.

A telework program in Loudoun County, Virginia recently expanded the traditional definition of telework to include mobile workers. The program provides county building inspectors the tools to complete all of their tasks in the field and at home, without traveling to and from the office. The county has equipped building inspectors and supervisors, approximately 70 employees, with notebook computers containing broadband cards and virtual private network (VPN) access to the county’s network and its applications. Through the program, inspectors can receive assignments, conduct research, and communicate inspection results remotely, eliminating the twice-daily drives to and from the main office for each inspector every work day. Loudoun County hopes to realize \$95,000 in annual leased office space savings when the current office lease expires.

## **Employee Benefits**

#### *Work/Life Balance and Cost Savings*

Telework Exchange finds that Americans spend more time commuting each year than on vacation. Telework can change that by reducing time in commuter traffic and offering greater flexibility to manage work/life balance. States such as Alabama are helping employees realize these benefits. In Alabama’s Department of Transportation, new hires throughout the state

can now go to their nearest division office for training, rather than driving three or four hours to the central office in Montgomery.<sup>7</sup> The state of Arizona estimates that its employees who telework, drive 5.25 million fewer miles and endure 181,000 fewer hours of stressful driving every year.<sup>8</sup>

Telework can also significantly reduce travel costs, especially considering the price of gas in today's economy. Congestion wastes 2.9 billion gallons of gas in the United States each year, creating a \$78 billion annual drain on the economy.<sup>9</sup> Telework Exchange research finds by teleworking full time, the average commuter can save more than \$2,000 a year on gas alone. Telework Exchange offers Telework Value Calculators, available at [www.teleworkexchange.com](http://www.teleworkexchange.com), that tally potential cost savings and environmental benefits associated with telework.

## Environmental Benefits

### *Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Wear and Tear on Public Transportation*

Telework Exchange research finds the average employee who commutes five days a week disperses eight tons of pollutants into the environment each year. Telework reduces traffic on congested roads and limits the wear and tear on various modes of public transportation. By embracing telework, state and local agencies can eliminate millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions every year.

In the state of California, the air pollution emissions averted through teleworking are significant. The state estimates that telework eliminates 180 tons of air pollution annually. Nationwide, 40,250 tons of air pollution per year could be avoided if all state service employees teleworked three days per week.<sup>10</sup>

## The Key to Telework: Technology

Technology – from available broadband to low-cost, high-performance collaboration tools – is paving the way for greater telework adoption. It is important to note upfront that telework

technology requirements vary by agency – there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. It is critical for agencies to purchase telework technology that best fits its employees’ needs. In fact, most large organizations already have the technology needed to implement telework programs. Many teleworkers require a computer, associated peripheral equipment (e.g., printer, copier, scanner, facsimile), phone, Internet connectivity, secure network access (e.g., VPNs), and technical support. Further, many agencies are already using tools such as video conferencing, Web-based collaboration solutions, voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and mobile personal digital assistants (PDA) to enhance the work environment and increase mobility.

Major advancements in collaborative technology can alleviate what 32 percent of Federal managers list as their biggest concern about telework – a lack of natural, face-to-face interaction. Studies show that face-to-face communication is critical to building relationships, reducing misinterpretations among dispersed teams, and removing misperceptions and barriers to telework.<sup>11</sup> As telework programs continue to gain momentum, new Web collaboration solutions and video conferencing systems are essential tools for home-based employees to maintain a visual connection with their workplace. Only in the last two years has the availability of bandwidth for video technology gotten to the point where it really makes sense for mass deployments of video for telework environments.

Video conferencing, as a component of all telework technology, is more than just a corporate expense; it is an investment in an organization's efficiency, productivity, and employee morale. Conferencing and collaboration solutions – with added capabilities including application sharing, white boarding, enhanced management tools, the ability to distribute meeting materials, the capability to record and playback sessions, and more – have finally joined the ranks of the telephone and e-mail as core business tools that agencies need to function in today's world.

## Preparing to Implement a Telework Program

While the benefits of telework may speak for themselves, management resistance, security concerns, and limited prior exposure to telework are all major obstacles to successfully launching telework programs. Several key steps will ensure smooth implementation of a state or local telework program.

- **Test Drive Continuity of Operations:** Test the agency's ability to telework in the event of an extended emergency situation to determine preparedness and the existence of robust business continuity plans
- **Eliminate Management Resistance:** Educate management on the benefits of telework and how it will help their teams. Agencies should implement manager-specific pilot programs, educate all management levels on telework drivers and benefits, emphasize the importance of telework to COOP strategies, implement performance-based review processes, build support gradually with a phased roll-out approach, and incorporate face-to-face technology solutions to ease concerns about management disconnect. Research finds that as managers' telework involvement increases, they express more favorable attitudes. Managers most involved in telework – i.e., those who telework themselves – report favorable impressions with 21 percent greater frequency than managers who do not telework or manage teleworkers<sup>12</sup>
- **Properly Allocate Resources:** Provide at least one full-time, senior-level telework advisor to focus exclusively on implementing or expanding the telework program. Telework advisors must have the time to educate managers and employees about telework, provide necessary training, and update agency telework policies. Also, ensure that telework advisors consult COOP planning teams as well as IT personnel when developing a telework program

- **Implement Evaluation System:** Develop measurements and evaluation forms to monitor the progress and tangible benefits of the telework program
- **Address Security Requirements:** Audit and understand the full population of employees who work from locations other than their primary work site to ensure all telework-eligible employees are working within an official telework program. Establish and enforce security guidelines and provide training and technology to ensure a secure mobile environment
- **Develop Policy and Eligibility Criteria:** Develop an agency-wide telework policy and address eligibility issues by defining eligibility in a consistent fashion. Make telework an opt-out rather than an opt-in criteria for employees and their managers

## Implementing a Telework Program

Launching a telework program requires more than buying the right technology and sending staff to their home offices. Robust state and local telework programs align with the organization's mission, culture, and business requirements, ensure teleworkers have suitable places to work off-site, and mandate that managers and employees have signed formal telework agreements. Success hinges on policies, procedures, training, and careful evaluation of the program.

A sound telework policy outlines specific technology requirements for teleworkers. Agencies must determine what equipment (if any) the organization will provide, offer reimbursements for Internet and phone charges, properly address security issues associated with the equipment, and provide guidelines on how teleworkers should solicit technical support. In addition, the policy must clearly define how an employee determines their telework eligibility. Tools such as Telework Exchange's Eligibility Gizmo ([www.teleworkexchange.com/gizmo](http://www.teleworkexchange.com/gizmo)) are available for managers to help determine telework eligibility.

Once the organization implements its policy, training becomes the single best strategy for avoiding pitfalls. Managers are trained to manage by results, not by constant supervision; non-teleworkers are trained on how to communicate with teleworkers; and teleworkers are trained on how to work remotely. It is critical that employees are comfortable in their telework situation, and it is important that they are culturally – and technologically – ready work outside of the office.

The final key to implementing a successful telework program is to establish measurable goals. As an example, the state of California measures teleworker and non-teleworker performance against project schedules and key milestones, regular status reporting, peer and/or project team quality reviews, team participation in decision making, and trust.<sup>13</sup>

## State of the States: Telework Best Practices



### *Commonwealth of Virginia*

Virginia first studied the notion of telework in 1994 and subsequently passed legislation supporting a telework program in 2004. In 2006, Governor Tim Kaine signed Executive Order 35, strengthening the commonwealth's telework program by establishing the Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance in the Office of the Secretary of Technology. Virginia defined telework to mirror the standards used at the Federal (and most local) levels. The commonwealth set a goal that 20 percent of its eligible workforce will be teleworking by 2010. In June 2008, Kaine announced an improved telework policy, directing all state agencies to consider ways to improve and expand agency telework and alternate work schedule programs.

Since its formation, the Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance has worked with the various branches of Virginia's government, including the governor's office, Department of Human Resource Management, Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA), Department of Accounts (DOA), Office of Commonwealth Preparedness, to develop and institutionalize policies and procedures to increase the number of state employees who are eligible and actively practice telework. This is done not only because of the benefits telework provides, but also as a part of the continuity of government and pandemic preparedness planning process. The Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance worked with the legislature on five telework-related pieces of legislation and implemented several new telework-related policies, including those associated with the acceptable use of personal computers, security of commonwealth data, and payment of telework-related expenses.

Virginia state employees must telework one day per week, or 32 hours per month, to qualify as a teleworker. The commonwealth recently updated its data collection process and ultimately increased its number of eligible employees from 4,617 in 2007 to 22,764 in 2008. The number of active teleworkers in Virginia has steadily increased as well, growing from 2,712 active teleworkers as of September 2007 to 5,179

“ The commonwealth is not unlike any other business that implements telework. We want to maximize cost savings, increase operational efficiencies, recruit and retain the best employees without regard to geographic boundaries, and provide a quality of life for our employees all while maintaining only the highest level of constituent customer service, ”

— Karen Jackson  
director, Office of Telework  
Promotion and Broadband  
Assistance, Commonwealth  
of Virginia

active teleworkers as of September 2008. Unlike many states, Virginia has not only an inward facing telework initiative, but also an external program dedicated to increasing teleworking in the private sector – Telework! VA. Karen Jackson, director, Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance, outlined components that enable Virginia’s effective telework program:

- **Strong policy framework:** The more demystified the decision-making and implementation processes, perceived risks are reduced and agency leaders are more willing to initiate the process
- **Executive support:** Governor Kaine’s creation of the Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance, coupled with support from the Virginia Secretaries of Administration, Technology, Transportation, and Commerce and Trade, placed telework on the radar of agency heads, as well as commonwealth employees. The 2008 announcement of an executive branch telework initiative was a key endorsement as interest in the program continues to grow
- **Team approach:** Virginia has embraced the idea of a strong, collaborative team working to advance teleworking. Legislators, Governor Kaine and his cabinet, and state agencies work to fill gaps that are preventing full implementation. Teamwork enables Virginia to move as quickly and effectively to develop and implement telework legislation and policies
- **Serendipity:** Economic constraints, including budget, gas prices, traffic congestion, etc., import the commonwealth and its employees, enabling telework to be embraced as a creative congestion – and cost-reduction tool

Virginia utilizes varying telework technology solutions from agency to agency, but Jackson identified broadband as Virginia’s key technology because of its critical role in a widespread telework initiative. She added that rising fuel costs have sparked an increase in teleconferencing and web-based meetings

– both of which require broadband in order to be effective. Beyond broadband, the commonwealth has benefited from effective policies that outline what is acceptable and ensure that agencies implement the best and most secure solutions.



### State of Georgia

Georgia’s state employee telework program was initiated by Executive Order in September 2003 as part of Governor Sonny Perdue’s “Work Away” program. Perdue hoped that by establishing and promoting telework, the state would set a positive example for Georgia’s employers to do the same. He determined that telework would benefit Georgia in addressing major transportation, productivity, quality of life, employment, and environmental issues. Currently, Atlanta ranks among the top cities with traffic congestion issues, and the Environmental Protection Agency has classified 28 counties in Georgia as non-attainment areas for ground-level ozone and/or particle pollution.

Perdue’s Executive Order mandated that all departments and agencies seek opportunities to implement telework initiatives and alternate scheduling arrangements in the workplace. It also created the position of State Telework Coordinator, who coordinates, manages, and promotes the initiative and is a communication conduit for agencies and the public. Perdue encourages annual recognition for agencies for their participation. In June 2008, Georgia agencies reported 3,500 employees who teleworked.

Georgia’s program, which was developed using a team from several agencies, is successful because of continuous support through the

Governor's Office and other agency leadership. Training for managers and employees using the statewide telework policy has also been a critical component of Georgia's program, as well as the fact that Georgia incorporates a standard employee/employer agreement and promotes alternate workplace safety.

Dorothy Gordon, the State Telework Coordinator with Georgia's State Personnel Administration, said each agency determines its technology solutions based on the business needs of the organization. Georgia established its statewide policy on teleworking, as well as its Technology Security Guide to assist agencies in making their technology decisions. Georgia's telework program is effective, because it encompasses a solid and realistic set of metrics, including:

- Surveys of both managers and employees
- Monthly reports for all Work Away Program areas showing:
  - Number of teleworkers per agency
  - Teleworkers' environmental savings through PeopleSoft (where available)
  - Monthly commute miles saved are reported for combined Work Away program areas

Georgia has accomplished Perdue's goals of setting a positive "example by doing." Agencies and managers who may have been apprehensive about teleworking have been shown that through proper management of the program, telework can be an effective business strategy. The positive effects of the initiative have mirrored those the program had hoped: increased employee productivity; enhanced employee morale and job satisfaction; commuter and environmental savings; and employee retention.

The state's telework program also helped lay the foundation for the passage of its Telework Tax Credit (Ga. Code 48-7-29.11). Georgia is the first state in the nation to offer employers a tax credit for teleworking. Businesses that will pay state of Georgia income tax in 2009 are eligible for the tax credit.

## Conclusion

As corporations and the Federal government embrace the benefits of telework, state and local agencies have the opportunity to learn from their successes, adopting best practices and reaping the many benefits of telework. Telework programs provide state and local employees tangible value, including a productive work environment resulting in better job performance, improved morale, and job satisfaction. Further, high gas prices and fuel concerns, disaster recovery preparation, recruitment and retention, and "green" initiatives are driving the perfect storm for telework.

Teleworking is more feasible than ever before thanks to laptops, broadband connectivity, PDAs, video conferencing, and other mobility solution. Technology enables employees to remain connected in home offices or in the field, while robust telework policies and procedures ensure program success.

As *The Washington Post* stated in an editorial about the Commonwealth of Virginia's telework initiative, "With roads clogged and gas prices at record highs, [Gov. Tim] Kaine is right to push teleworking. State agencies ... should follow the governor's example."<sup>14</sup>

### Telework Exchange:

For more information on telework or to start or enhance your telework program, visit Telework Exchange at [www.teleworkexchange.com](http://www.teleworkexchange.com).

### TANDBERG:

For more information on technology that enables face-to-face contact and telework collaboration, visit TANDBERG at [www.tandberg.com/ind\\_focus/public\\_sector/index.jsp](http://www.tandberg.com/ind_focus/public_sector/index.jsp).

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