

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the invitation to appear before you today to discuss the General Services Administration's (GSA's) view on improving Federal Telework participation and current telework activity. GSA's partnership with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on the Governmentwide Telework Program is very active and well documented.

After more than 15 years of continuing efforts to build a robust and vital Federal telework program, levels of participation are still not as high as we believe they can and should be. Successful implementation of telework in the Federal Government involves culture change and pro-active senior leadership, along with useful policies, implementation guidance, program support, best practices, and effective tools. Over this timeframe, GSA and OPM have worked continuously with other Federal agencies to identify and provide the needed guidance and tools.

Legislation that would remove barriers to Federal Telework is welcomed, and we look forward to working with Congress on appropriate telework legislation. One legislative area that might also be addressed is travel pay associated with long distance telework, that is telework from locations beyond the local commuting area of the employing organization's facility where the employee would work but for the telework arrangement. Under existing law, such telework arrangements typically require an increase in agency travel expenses; since the telework location is the employee's official duty station for pay and travel purposes. Thus, if an agency occasionally requires an employee to report to the employing organization's facility, the agency must pay for the travel to and from the facility since it is travel away from the employee's official duty station – even though the need for travel results from the employee's personal choice of a telework site. These travel costs serve as a disincentive to establishing such arrangements. Making the payment of such travel expenses optional could help agencies with their efforts to retain valued employees and remove a barrier to the expansion of telework in the Federal Government.

Last year, GSA published Federal Management Regulation (FMR) Bulletin 2006-B3, which established guidelines for agencies implementing and operating alternative workplace arrangements in the Federal sector. This first-of-its-kind guidance helps agencies resolve commonly encountered telework implementation issues, such as the provision of workplace equipment to teleworkers, and the payment of utility costs for alternative worksites.

This year, we followed up with FMR Bulletin 2007-B1, "Information Technology and Telecommunications Guidelines for Federal Telework and Other Alternative Workplace Arrangement Programs." This policy document, which integrated guidance from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Office of Management and Budget,

the Government Accountability Office and GSA, was designed to help agencies identify and provide for the technology fundamentals for successful and secure telework programs. GSA recognized the need to provide telework technology and security information in a consolidated, easy to read format that covered technology topics such as basic equipment, telecommunications, security, privacy, training and support. By clarifying the technology, security and privacy policy guidance for telework, this guidance helped establish that telework, when appropriately implemented, can maintain information security. Upcoming FMR bulletins may provide further policy guidance on telework.

In order to provide an alternative to home-based telework, GSA has established 14 telework centers to provide alternative workplaces for those employees who cannot or prefer not to work at home. These centers, located in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, are established in convenient locations for use by employees who can reduce their traditional commutes by working at a center near their homes.

We believe there is a market for center-based telework and, in fact, I am a long-time user of our Fairfax center. Over the years, GSA has run several “free trial” promotions to attract new users to the telework centers, including the recent promotion for Federal managers. GSA’s goal is to facilitate culture change by giving managers the actual experience of telework. To date, we have 40 managers signed up for the program.

Technology has often been cited as a barrier to increased telework in the Federal Government. GSA conducted two in-depth studies on this topic and published important and useful findings which will help agencies increase their telework participation. The study findings are based on survey and other information from agency chief information officers, managers, teleworkers, telework coordinators, and other involved in telework programs.

Some highlights from the research are:

- Information Technology (IT) management officials need to be more effectively engaged in telework planning, budgeting, and implementation to ensure the successful and effective incorporation of IT in telework programs.
- To create a successful enterprise-wide approach to telework and simultaneously maximize total benefits and return on investment, agencies should include telework technology in enterprise planning and architecture.
- The necessary IT security products and services that address telework-related security requirements exist currently.
- Telework technology costs are invisible to senior executives in most organizations and most agencies are not making telework part of their agency-wide strategic vision.

- Using estimated averages based on agency responses, an investment of approximately \$16 million over three years to provide a “basic” teleworker-at-home solution for 50,000 teleworkers at an agency with 100,000 staff can, in appropriate circumstances, be offset with a benefits realization of over \$36 million over the same three-year period.
- Investments in telework support the entire organization as well as other critical agency-wide objectives, including enhancement of continuity of operations programs, IT modernization efforts, support of mobile workers, and legislative compliance.

In short, no IT issue is of such a degree that it is a barrier to the growth of telework implementation and there are solutions to address perceived barriers. These studies are readily available on our website at <http://www.gsa.gov/telework>. There has been widespread interest in the incorporation of telework as a mechanism for emergency Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans. This is a natural benefit of telework, but you cannot wait until an emergency to implement a COOP telework program. Federal Agencies must have a viable telework program in place as part of a normal operation plan so that employees may fully transition to this alternative work arrangement in the event of an emergency. The result would be a more well trained and properly equipped work force that is allowed to participate in telework to the maximum extent possible.

Other valuable telework applications include:

- Telework combined with alternative officing can enable agencies to reduce cost and improve the utilization of existing facilities.
- Remote alternative worksites can be used to accommodate workers who need to work in a high security environment; and to reduce the adverse effects on employees impacted by Base Relocation programs.
- Telework is a great way to enhance recruitment and retention of Federal workers and to improve work/life balance. Would you rather be stuck on the Beltway at rush hour or be done with your work in time to make the kid’s soccer practice?
- The environmental impact of telework should serve as additional motivation for stronger telework participation policies. . As an example, if 50 percent of the Federal workforce teleworked 2 days per week, that theoretically could cut nearly a fourth (23 percent), or 944,000 tons of work trip emissions produced by Federal workers who commute to work in single occupancy vehicles. Collectively, these teleworkers could theoretically save nearly 2 billion miles of vehicle travel, more than 90 million gallons of gasoline, more than 277 million dollars in gasoline expenses, and more than 32,000 typical work years of time.

Finally, GSA's Position is that to facilitate the necessary culture change, it is important to ensure that the entire workforce be made aware of telework laws, policies, benefits and practices. To that end, our efforts include a very active listserv and website along with videos, promotion materials, press releases, and beneficial partnerships with advocacy organizations.

In conclusion, GSA's goals of improving the growth of Federal telework requires proactive top level leadership; strong policy mandates and clear guidelines; increased program support and integration of telework into overall agency planning; increased demonstration and utilization of telework applications and recommended practices; and high visibility program promotion.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Following is additional information and detail in support of our testimony.

GSA EXAMPLE OF THE VALUE OF POLICY CLARIFICATION

A case study example of the importance of clear and strong policies for telework comes from an Inspector General audit of our GSA telework program. Our Chief Human Capital Office (CHCO) requested the audit. Briefly, the auditors found that:

- Policies and procedures need to be updated to comply with new OPM requirements
- Program not consistently implemented across GSA
- Monitoring controls not in place to ensure accurate reporting on participation

Our CHCO agreed with the auditor findings and is implementing corrective actions such as policy revisions; training for managers, coordinators, participants; improved process for tracking; and a Telework “Campaign” for the entire agency.

LOCATIONS OF FEDERAL TELEWORK CENTERS

MARYLAND : Bowie State University Telecommuting Center (Bowie State University); Frederick Telework Center (Frederick, MD); Hagerstown Telework Center (Hagerstown, MD); Prince Frederick Telework Center (Prince Frederick, MD); Waldorf InTeleWork Center (Waldorf, MD); Laurel Lakes Telework Center (Laurel, MD)

VIRGINIA : Fairfax City Telework Center (Fairfax, VA); Herndon Telework Center (Herndon, VA); Manassas Telework Center (Manassas, VA); Fredericksburg Telework Center (Fredericksburg, VA); Stafford County Telework Center (Stafford, VA); Woodbridge Telework Center (Woodbridge, VA); Winchester Telework Center (Winchester, VA)

WEST VIRGINIA: Jefferson County Telework Center (Biz Tech) (Kearneysville, WV)

GSA AGENCY TELEWORK PROGRAM

Of a total of 12,205 employees at GSA, 11,190 or 92 percent are eligible for telework.

The following table is a summary of telework participation at GSA:

Telework Participation		
Type of Telework	Number of Employees	Average Days Per Month
Core Telework		
3 or more days/week	305	12*
1 or 2 days/week	761	4 or 8
Non-Core Telework		
At least once/month	490	Unknown
Intermittent	Unknown	
Total	1,556	

* The level of participation for employees teleworking three or more days per week ranges from that three day minimum to five days per week.